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[PRICE ONE PENNY]



[HER SOFT DARK EYES WERE FIRED ON MR. FORRESTER WITH A STRANGE INQUIRY IN THEIR DEPTH. "IS IT REALLY YOU?"]

GUY FORRESTER'S SECRET.

CHAPTER V.

POPPIE got home soon after nine to find Anastasia Smith tramping up and down the parlour in a most perturbed state of mind.

"I'm all right," said the small delinquent, taking the bull by the horns; "but, Stacy, I was nearly killed, so I hope you'll be extra good to me to make up!"

"Tell me all about it," commanded Miss Anastasia, when her friend's wraps had been taken off, and she had helped her liberally to pigeon-pie. "I am sure you have had an exciting adventure!"

But when she heard "all about it" the spinster gave a prodigious sniff.

"Mark my words, Poppie, you'll be cajoled into matrimony! You haven't got the moral courage to stand firm. But you know what helpless, senseless creatures men are, and yet you spend hours in their company!"

"Not hours!"

"Two hours, by your own showing! I am not angry with you, Poppie, but hurt, deeply hurt."

"Well," said Poppie, striving to defend herself, "of course I could have spent the night in the cemetery if you had preferred it. It was remarkably damp, and would probably have brought on bronchitis, still no doubt it would have been more prudent."

"You provoking child! You know I don't mind your making use of the man to get out of the cemetery, but once safe over the wall you should have instantly dismissed him."

"But he wouldn't be dismissed."

"That's just what I tell you; you've no strength of mind. I should like you to show me the man who would linger in my society against my will!"

"But I'm not sure quite it was against my will! You see, Stacy, that long road to the station is awfully dark and lonely."

"You're a born coward, Poppie!"

"And," disregarding this compliment, "you see there is but one way to the station, and we both wanted to catch the train."

"Then you should have walked on opposite sides of the way and not conversed. Perhaps you did adopt this precaution?"

"I'm afraid not."

"Do you mean you talked to a man, a stranger, alone at that time of night?"

"Well you see, Stacy, I had to talk to him in the cemetery, and I hardly knew how to stop suddenly!"

"What did you talk about?"

"I hardly know. He has just come back from Maryland. I wonder if he knows my enemy, Stacy?"

"Probably it was your enemy himself."

"Nonsense!"

"It sounds perfectly feasible."

"Oh! it wasn't," said Poppie, firmly. "I am quite sure of it. This was quite a brown, sun-dried old party, and my enemy was a mere boy."

"I see it."

"Besides, this man seemed almost as lonely and neglected as I am!"

"You've no cause to be lonely. If you just throw your lot in with that of the cause,

you'll find yourself one of a devoted band of sisters."

"I'm not quite sure I want sisters, Stacy. I don't think I ever regretted being an only child."

"Well, it hasn't done you much good!"

"No."

"It's getting late, and as you've such a journey before you I think you'd better go to bed early. There's a nice fire in your room."

"Thank you, Stacy."

"And your mind's quite made up?"

"Quite."

"You know, my dear, I think you're wrong!"

"Stacy! I did at least expect sympathy from you!"

Stacy looked a little ashamed.

"And you have it, Poppie; but it's this governing idea I object to. Whatever put it into your head?"

"I must earn my own living."

"I see no must. You know while I—"

"While you live you would share your last crust with me. I know that, Stacy, but I want to be independent."

"Well, promise me two things. If they're not kind to you in that country place you'll come straight back?"

"I promise that willingly."

"And—my dear, I hardly know how to say it, but if you find you've made a mistake, don't be too proud to say so."

"Why, Stacy, it was you who proposed it!"

"I know, but I feel uncomfortable! My mind misgives me, Poppie! I don't believe you'll keep single always; and if you take up with some disreputable adventurer, I shall think it's all my fault!"

Poppie's face grew grave. Rising from her seat she put one slender hand on her friend's shoulder.

"I think, Stacy, you have been my friend ever since I can remember. Did you ever know me break my word?"

"Never!"

"Then, listen to me, while I promise never to change my condition. As I am now I shall be always. Why, Stacy, her tone changing to one of lightness, "I do believe you are crying! Pray did Mr. Forrester convert you to the old-fashioned notion that a woman's happiness began and ended with a wedding ring that you look so dimmed over the promise I thought would rejoice your heart?"

But Stacy said nothing. She just put the girl's soft arms away, and went out of the room, and Poppie came to the conclusion that long ago, before she joined the strong-minded sisterhood who support women's rights and attack the prerogatives of men, Anastasia had had a lover of her own and lost him.

But this thought did not quite fill Poppie's dreams. She had room for other visions too, and her first waking thought was a regret that she had not asked the name of the friend who came so conveniently to her rescue the night before.

"I dare say he has forgotten all about it by this time. I'm glad I told him I was called Poppie; the other name is so awful I never mean to own it; but oh! dear Stacy would be horrified if she knew it."

It was a lovely day: fast one of those bright, genial mornings that are not uncommon in late October. It must be confessed Miss Poppie had a strange sense of loneliness at leaving her old friend's protection; but fond as she was of Stacy, their tastes and habits were too dissimilar to have made it wise to live together, and the girl had the love of change common to youth. She wanted to see what there was in the great world, from all contact with which she had been so carefully secluded.

Poppie was adventuresome; life in the Bloomsbury lodging would not have satisfied her aspirations.

"Shall I do, Stacy?" she asked, a little timidly, when she came down ready, dressed for her journey, and Miss Smith stood ready

to accompany her on its first stage—that is, to Paddington Station. "Do you think they will like me?"

"The Countess will probably think she has another child to look after instead of anyone to assist her in the care of her daughter!" said Stacy, quietly. "I never saw anyone look so absurdly young!"

"Well you know, dear, I am not what people call old."

"When your mother was your age she was a sober married woman with a baby to look after," said her mentor, sagely.

Poppie winced; whether at the thought of being a married woman, or the contingency of the baby, remains uncertain. Stacy went on, coolly,—

"While as for you, I don't think you look a day older than when you were fifteen!"

"The Countess likes young people. She said so in her letter."

"She didn't say she preferred an infant, did she? Well, my dear, it's no use arguing; you've made up your mind to go, and I am sorry enough for it, but there's an end of it!"

Poor Poppie! She felt as though she had committed some heinous sin, and when the train started out of the terminus and Stacy's poke-bonnet was lost to view, she felt about as lonely and disconsolate as a poor girl sitting out to seek her fortune could well do; but the journey was in itself a novelty, as they tore through the lovely midland counties, then in all the glory of their autumn beauty.

Poppie felt her heart a little less heavy, and by the time they reached Gloucester she was tolerably cheerful.

An hour more, and the train stopped at Ross Ferry, the nearest station to her new abode. Poppie felt the least bit nervous.

Although an orphan, and oppressed by an unknown enemy, she had never experienced anything like unkindness or slights. She had—until her recent loss—been surrounded by luxurious ease, and had enjoyed all the comforts wealth can purchase. She felt just a little doubtful of her reception. Would the Countess deem it a duty to keep her in her proper place, and what was precisely the proper place of a governess?

Truth to say, in her soft cashmere dress, almost hidden by a long anakin coat, with her bright hair crowned by a coquettish little tuque of the same fur, Poppie looked as little like a humble dependent as she possibly could.

She gave her ticket to the porter and looked round a little anxiously. There was only one lady on the platform, and she seemed anxiously looking for some expected friend.

A sweet, motherly face tinged with sadness, and a plain, deep mourning costume were so unlike Poppie's ideal of a Countess that she never gave a thought that this lady could be waiting for her. It was only when she heard a sweet voice ask the porter when the next train came in from London, and his reply ended with "my lady," that the truth dawned on Poppie her employer was before her.

Poppie felt decidedly uncomfortable as she accepted the lady.

"I am very sorry," she began, awkwardly, "but I think you must be looking for me!"

Lady Munro smiled, she really could not help it.

"I came to meet Miss Smith," she said, pleasantly, "but—"

"It is quite right," said Poppie, interrupting the Countess, and then blushing for the freedom. "I mean I am Miss Smith, my lady."

She was no relation in the world to Anastasia of women's rights celebrity, but the fact remained—her cognomen was the same.

Smith is not a very unusual name. Reader, it may have happened to you once or twice to know two people bearing it, and yet in no way related to each other.

"I can hardly believe it," said Lady Munro,

with another smile. "You look as very young! I expected quite a different face."

"I'm getting older every day," said Poppie, quietly, "and I am sure I know enough to teach a little girl."

Lady Munro feared she was hurt.

"My dear," she said, gently, "I am quite willing to think so, and I am very glad fate has sent me such a bright young friend. My husband is far from well. We have neither of us recovered our spirits since the death of our little boy; and though we felt the time had come for Dolly to have a governess, we dreaded it with all our hearts. I thought I should find myself encumbered with a short-haired, spectacled young lady, full of the ologies and Greek roots. I assure you it is a pleasant surprise."

Poppie blushed and thanked her.

"You are in mourning, I see," said the Countess, kindly, "so you will not mind our leading a quiet life."

"I shall like it. Oh! Lady Munro, how kind you are. I felt awfully frightened before I came, and now I am quite happy."

"I am very glad to hear it. I wonder your friends could part with you."

"I have no relations, and one couldn't spend one's life visiting friends; besides, I had a great reason for wishing to be independent."

"I wonder what it was?"

Poppie gave one glance into the kind honest face, and trusted the Countess at once and for always.

"That's a great trouble a long time ago, and I thought being among strangers would help me to get over it."

"My dear, a long time ago you must have been a perfect child."

"Not quite."

"I suppose it was a love affair?"

"Oh! dear no," said Poppie, firmly. "I don't believe in love at all. I think, Lady Munro, it is quite an exploded idea."

The Countess felt more and more bewildered.

"My dear," she told the Earl an hour later when he came to inquire about the new arrival, "she is not in the least like a governess. She is nothing in the world but a pretty child with big brown eyes and rather decided opinions. Later on she might not turn out Dolly a walking genius, but she is just the person we want now to brighten up our home and be a kind of playfellow to Dolly."

In three days' time Miss Smith had settled at Ardmore as completely as though she had lived there for years. To the Earl she was a kind of pet protégée, to Lady Munro a younger sister, while from their first introduction to each other Dolly fairly worshipped her governess.

"It is perfectly delightful," wrote Poppie to her friend, the other Miss Smith, whose independence had been so keen a blow to Guy Forrester, "perfectly delightful, and I think, Anastasia, if you would forgive the Earl for presuming to exist you would think Ardmore a kind of little Paradise. There are no other men in the neighbourhood, as far as I can make out, which would be an attraction in your eyes; but the young ladies here are not educated up to appreciating their advantages, and one actually lamented to me with tears in her eyes yesterday that all the gentlemen within visiting reach were over sixty or under sixteen, except Sir Ira Vernon. Of him I hear perpetual hymns of praise; but be easy, dear Stacy, he is far too grand a person to cast a thought to a little governess. Besides, he is miles and miles away, and even if he returned you know you have my promise that nothing in the world shall induce me to change my condition. The Countess is a sweet woman, but very behind the age. It would be a noble work to convert her to the cause, only somehow or other I never feel the energy to begin."

She had finished the letter when it came into her head to add a postscript:

"Have you heard any more of Mr. Forrester?"

Perhaps the advocate of women's rights objected to postscripts, for she made not the slightest allusion to this one when, in a week's time, she replied to Poppie's epistle.

"I have great news for you this morning, Poppie!" said Lady Munro, the very day after Miss Anastasia's reply arrived.

Miss Smith had been at the Castle less than a fortnight, but she had become "Poppie" to the whole family! In fact, so completely at home did she seem that she was regarded both by servants and callers more as a young friend visiting the Countess than Lady Dorothea's governess.

"I never could guess anything in my life, Lady Munro; I think I'm too stupid."

"If I tell you it is two pieces of news, then, can't you guess one? Now what would console the young ladies of the place with delight?"

Poppie smiled wickedly.

"Sir Ira Vernon's return."

"Right; and as his own house is but a dreary place to come to alone after such a long absence he has written to the Earl to propose coming here and spending a week with us while Fairlawn is made ready for his reception."

"Oh!"

"Aren't you pleased? We have had no company since our boy's death, and the Earl has seemed more interested in Sir Ira's return than in anything."

"Then it must be nice to have him," said Poppie, who was the most sympathetic of mortals, "and I daresay he is charming, only you see my friend always taught me to hate young men."

"And did you always do it?"

"I have never really known any during the last seven years excepting assistants in shops, servants and such people. I have only spoken to two men under fifty."

"Well, you will be able to make up for it now. Sir Ira is twenty-three, very handsome, and immensely wealthy."

"And your other news, Lady Munro?" said Poppie, with an heroic attempt to turn the conversation from the young baronet.

"My nephew is coming home."

"Your nephew!"

"My husband's, rather, for I have never seen him. He is older than Sir Ira, and has had a great deal of trouble; but from all I hear he is a noble character, fit in all things to bear the title that should have been my boy's."

"Do you mean he will be Lord Munro?"

"Probably, unless Dolly has a brother."

"And don't you hate him?"

"No."

"I should."

"There is a spice of justice in his succeeding to Ardmore," said the Countess, slowly. "Until he was five-and-twenty he was brought up as its heir. My husband's marriage blighted his prospects, and cost him his promised wife."

"You mean the shock killed her?"

Lady Munro explained the fair Emmeline's perfidy, and told Guy Forrester's story—told it with warm, womanly sympathy with his sorrows and affectionate admiration for his noble qualities.

She spoke of him simply as "my nephew," and Poppie began to look on the young man as quite a distinguished character.

"And Mrs. Jenkins is a widow," said the little governess, thoughtfully. "Lady Munro, wouldn't you ask her here and let Mr. Munro meet her? They might be happy again."

"I am quite sure she is unworthy of him; and, Poppy, Guy's name is not Munro."

"I thought it would be the same as yours."

"It is. Don't you know our family name, Poppie? Dolly's proper title is Dorothea Forrester, only no one ever uses it?"

What had happened to Miss Smith? She seemed suddenly taken with a fit of shivering. Perhaps she deemed it treachery to her friend Anastasia to make acquaintance with the

guardian whose protection she had refused; perhaps, hearing such an enthusiastic account of him, she regretted Anastasia had treated him so cavalierly.

Lady Munro, the most unsuspecting of women, ascribed Poppie's shivering to a draught, and herself closed the door before she went on.

"Guy has been abroad for some years, but we all hope he will settle in England. He has a charming little place in Surrey called Woodlake, and Lord Munro is anxious to increase his allowance."

"Is Mr. Forrester coming soon?"

"I thought I told you to-morrow. Ira Vernon also. We shall be quite gay. I expect they will come to Rock Ferry Station. I shall drive over and meet the four o'clock train."

But when the day came the Countess changed her mind, and thought it would be pleasanter to receive the nephew she had never seen in her own home; so Lord Munro went alone to the station, and his wife waited indoors to welcome her guests.

She had wanted Poppie to bear her company, but Miss Smith represented it was two days since Lady Dorothea had been out, and she ought not to miss such a fine afternoon for a walk.

So the pair started, and, it being bright and frosty, they turned into the Ardmore woods, intending to enjoy a long ramble.

They made a pretty pair. Poppie looked almost a child herself in her warm fur coat, and Dolly was a chubby-faced, curly-headed creature, whom many motherly hearts would have loved without her being an Earl's daughter.

"Don't go too far," had been Lady Munro's parting charge, given partly because she thought she wanted her little girl at her side when she was introduced to her husband's heir.

Usually Miss Smith was the most obedient of governesses, but she had a perverse fit on her this afternoon.

She did not want to meet Mr. Forrester. She knew she could not avoid seeing a good deal of him while he was at Ardmore, but she would at least defer the moment of the introduction as long as possible; and so, when Dolly suggested that the holly trees in the wood were covered with red berries and it would be splendid to go and pick some, Miss Smith forgot the Countess's request, and gave a willing consent.

Poppie was, as it were, two people on this November afternoon. The one talked to the child, and was the most delightful of playfellows; the other held a strange conversation with a kind of second self.

"If only he knew it was I who advised Stacy what to say to him! If only he knew how much I had to with her answer I think Mr. Forrester would do anything rather than meet me! It is very strange! Here I have been hearing of him all these years, and now we are actually going to meet face to face at last! Of course I shall not tell Stacy; it wouldn't be kind; but, oh! I wish I could get quite friendly with Mr. Forrester, and lead him on to talk of her! I should quite like to know what he thinks of his ward, and whether he approves of her decision? Heigho!"

Here little Poppie gave rather a dreary sigh.

"After all, what does it matter? It can't make any difference to me! Nothing in the whole world can! I have lost the only creature who loved me, and nothing else matters! Still, I wonder what Mr. Forrester will be like, and whether he will tell his friends here about Stacy? I rather fancy not. How ridiculous it was of Stacy, dear old thing! to say the stranger who came to my help that night in the cemetery could have been Mr. Guy! Quite absurd! Just as though Maryland was such an obscure place only one person could come from there at a time! Well, I suppose it's no use fighting against destiny! I would

never have brought about an introduction to Mr. Forrester willingly, but as it's forced on me I don't see how I can help it!"

She was recalled from dreamland by a little hand pulling rather determinedly at her coat-sleeve.

"Poppie, Poppie! why don't you talk to me? Why don't you answer me?"

"Why, Dolly," said the young governess, with a start, "I thought you were picking holly berries. What a nice lot you have got!"

"Yes," and the small maiden surveyed her basket contentedly; "but, Poppie, I'm very tired. I want to go home."

Poor Poppie! She could have re-echoed that cry! She, too, was very tired—tired of her brief attempt at independence!

Poppie would have been thankful to go home to the old life, when all care, all need for decision was taken from her shoulders, and life's rough places made smooth for her tender feet!

She would have gone back gladly, but she could not. The loving heart which had made home for her and strewn her path with flowers was still in death!

She roused herself by an effort.

"Of course we will go home, Dolly. It is getting late; it must be later than I thought. We will turn round and walk over so fast. Then perhaps we shall be back before mother begins to want us."

"Mother always wants me," said the little voice, and the words awoke a pang at Poppie's heart, but she only took the child's hand in hers, and went on cheerfully, on and on; but though they walked briskly and never turned either to rest or pause they seemed to make no progress.

Try as she would Poppy could not discern the white turrets of the Castle shining amid the trees.

When she and Poppie turned to walk home Poppie had believed them to be at most a mile from the entrance to the wood; but an hour's steady walking found them as far off as ever.

The short winter's day was closing in now, and a few large flakes of snow began to fall. Poppie recalled Lady Munro's fears of the weather, and began to wonder if a storm was coming.

"Dollie," she said at last, feeling she could not keep it any longer from the child, "I am afraid we have missed our way. I can't see a trace of the Castle, look which side I will."

Little Lady Dorothea looked at her governess with wondering eyes.

"Can't we go home, Poppie?"

"Yes, yes," said the girl, hurriedly; "only it may take time. I can't think which way to turn. Dollie, look round and see if you can tell me where you are."

But the appeal was fruitless. Nearly seven, Dollie was an intelligent child, but she had never needed to use the bump of locality.

Her mother rarely walked at all. The nurse who had preceded Poppie never let her charge leave the Castle grounds, though the entrance to the woods was close to her own door. Little Dollie knew as little of them as Poppie.

"It all seems strange," she said, pitifully; "and, please, I want my mother!"

Poppie repented bitterly the dreamy fit which had prevented her noticing which way they went.

She had simply followed Dollie, believing when they were tired they had only to turn their faces. Now it came on her with a pang she had heard the Ardmore woods were seven miles in extent.

They might wander through them for hours, and yet find no clue to their way home.

An awful remorse seized on Poppie. Must she destroy the little life entrusted to her care, and wring the hearts of Dollie's parents, yet aching for her brother's loss, by making them doubly childless?

"If only I could save her!" thought Miss Smith, "nothing else would matter. As for

me, I suppose Stacy would be a little sorry, but no one else would care!"

Alas! the promise of the leaden sky was amply fulfilled. The snow came down with fury, covering everything around with its beautiful white mantle.

"I so cold!" lisped Dollie, and the complaint cut into the governess's heart like an arrow.

Rapidly Poppie's course was taken. To attempt to find her way through that driving tempest of sleet and snow would have been madness.

Had she risked it for herself, she dared not for the child. She could not have carried Dollie and the little one would have been drenched through and through; besides, if they had failed to find their way in daylight, how could they discover it in the gathering darkness with the driving snow to blind them? Poppie's choice was soon taken.

Seeing a kind of hollow niche between the trees she crept in there, seated herself on the stump of a fallen oak, and took the child in her arms. Without a moment's hesitation she unfastened her sealskin coat, and flung it round them both, as a kind of counterpane.

"Are we going to bed out in the wood?" inquired Dollie, sleepily. "Oh! what will mother say?"

"She won't mind if you are safe. Do you feel quite warm, Dollie?"

"Quite," murmured the child from her furry nest. "I am nearly asleep."

A few moments, and Poppie knew by her regular breathing she almost had become quite, and the child slept as peacefully as in her bed at home.

Poppie pressed her a little closer in her arms, pulled her sealskin more tightly round her; then, feeling Dollie was safe for the present, she tried to think of what must be her course.

She felt positive Lord and Lady Munro would institute a minute search for their darling, and there was little doubt that sooner or later they would send men to explore the wood—help must come! The only question was—how soon?

Poppie looked at the sleeping child, and decided she would take no hurt provided she was rescued by the morning. For herself, she was less certain.

Her arms were terribly cramped with holding Dollie, and her limbs felt stiff and numb bereft of the warm sealskin she had resigned to the child.

It dawdled on Poppie she might just keep up, so as to protect her little one till help came, but then—?

"It's strange!" she pondered to herself. "Over and over again these last three months I've thought I should like to die, have said I had nothing left to live for; but now that death seems so near, almost staring me in the face, I shrink from it. Of course, my life could never have been like other girls—of course there must always have been a shadow on it. I could never have had a home and love, and hope, and still, in spite of my enemy, I might have been happy!"

"And I should like to have seen Guy Forrester just once. I have heard so much about him, I would like to have judged for myself what he was like. Anastasia always said there must have been some good in him, or old Jabez Smith (as she will call him) could not have been so infatuated. Well, one thing, he must be a brave man; a coward would never have impressed Stacy, and though she never told me so I saw directly by her manner she almost liked him after she had seen him."

"Well," and there was a half sigh, "Lady Munro will have to look out for another governess. Why, even if I don't do she'd never trust me with Dollie again after this. No, there will be another governess at Ardmore, and perhaps it would be better if I don't get over it; they will think of me kindly then, and somehow I don't think I should like to be sent back to Stacy in disgrace as a failure."

Poppie's reflections were interrupted by the

sound of footsteps. The fury of the storm had abated now, but still the coats of the two men whom she could dimly see approaching were thickly covered with white flakes; but for the friendly light of the lantern in the hand of the foremost of the two they would have looked nothing but vague, shadowy forms.

A deathlike faintness stole over Poppie, her eyes were closed, she could not move or speak, all her sense of hearing left her, she was utterly unconscious of all that went on around her.

"Look there!"

"That's not them. A pair of children this. Forrester, give me the lantern. I feel a strange, quailish feeling like a woman. What if they are dead?"

"Nonsense!" and the voice had a strange familiar sound in Poppie's ear. "Just lift the child up; there," and he placed Dollie in his friend's arms. "She is as right as possible."

Dollie proved it by opening her eyes and demanding in a sleepy tone to be taken to mother.

"We'll take you," was the kindly answer. "And now tell us, are you Dollie?"

"Yes," very positively; "but you must bring Poppie, too. I can't leave my Poppie." Guy Forrester kissed the child's face now, and turned to his friend.

"Can you find your way through the wood alone? Every moment must be increasing Lady Munro's anxiety, and I can't leave this poor girl."

"I'll light the second lantern. Of course I can find my way, Forrester; I know the Ardmore woods as well as you do."

He struck a light, wrapped Dollie in a thick shawl which her mother had sent; then he set off at a rapid pace, and Guy and his charge were left alone in the November evening.

Mr. Forrester was not a superstitious man, but at that moment he believed firmly in fate. He had lingered in London days after his business was finished because he could not forget the girl he had met in the deserted cemetery.

Although he told himself repeatedly she could be nothing to him, not even a friend, and that it was far wiser they should meet no more, he had made many an effort to find her, even to interrogating the old guardian of the cemetery.

It had all come to naught, and at last, for very shame sake he would no longer delay his journey to Ardmore.

He met Ira Vernon at the station, and they travelled to Rook Ferry together.

Arriving by an earlier train than they had been expected by, they reached the Castle to find the Countess beginning to grow uneasy at the little girl's absence.

When he heard his aunt had a young governess whose name was Poppie a strange doubt filled Guy's heart, but the coincidence seemed too strange, too wonderful, to be true.

He did not really credit it till he stood in the snow-covered woods, the rays of his lantern falling full on the sweet childish face which had engraven itself so indelibly on his memory.

It was Poppie!—the little lonely girl he had saved from spending the night in the dreary suburban cemetery! Poppie, the pretty child who had told him she was all alone in the world, and had a cruel enemy!

As he gazed on her white, still features a great longing came to Guy's heart to gather her in his arms, and himself protect her from all enemies.

He longed to take this pretty lonely child and gild her life with sunshine; but he could do nothing for her—worse than nothing—and so as he bent over her he gave a little sigh.

At the sound of the sigh Poppie opened her eyes. The strange spell that had kept her motionless was broken. The deadly faintness left her.

She seemed restored as though by magic to herself, and her large soft brown eyes were

fixed on Mr. Forrester with a strange inquiry in their depths.

"Is it really you?"

"Ay. Then you have not forgotten me. I little thought of what I should find at Ardmore when I accepted my uncle's invitation!"

"Your uncle!" Oh, how her face had changed! "Do you mean you are Lord Munro's nephew?"

"To be sure! I am Guy Forrester, at your service."

But the last seven words fell unheeded on her ear. Poppie had relapsed into unconsciousness.

(To be continued.)

A GOLDEN DESTINY.

—38—

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE day on which Sir Trarice Leigh, having returned from Blackminster, told Mrs. Seymour that his will was duly signed and witnessed, and that if anything happened to him Ermentrude would become his heiress, was verily a red-letter one in her calendar.

"At last I can breathe freely," she muttered, on regaining her room after hearing the important communication, "and the miserable anxiety of these last few weeks must surely be nearly at an end. To-morrow I shall hear from Sumner, who will also have good news to tell us. Yes, my fortunate star is at last in the ascendant."

She went to her daughter's boudoir, where Ermentrude was standing at the window, disconsolately staring out into the grounds, which lay bathed in a glow of golden sunlight. In her hand she held an open note, but this she hastily crushed into her pocket on observing her mother.

Mrs. Seymour's quick eyes observed the action, but she did not, at the moment, take any notice of it—perhaps because she was so anxious to give the joyful tidings which she had just received.

Ermentrude's delight equalled her own, although she did not give it verbal expression. Her stately form seemed instinct with a new-born pride, and she drew up her lovely neck, as if she already felt on her head the coronet of a countess.

"Yours is indeed a golden destiny!" her mother said, gazing on her beauty with a very natural pride. "If you have sons, the elder will succeed to his father's earldom, and the younger must have Sir Trarice's estates. Where will you find another girl equally lucky?"

Across the radiance of the girl's face there came a sudden shadow, and she drew hastily back from the window.

Mrs. Seymour, following her gaze, saw the Italian secretary, Villari, passing the terrace beneath.

Turning round, she fixed her eyes searchingly on Ermentrude's face, which had grown suddenly pale, while an expression, half frightened, half defiant, had come upon it.

"What is the matter?" she asked, in a low voice, coming in front of her daughter, and taking hold of both her hands. "What is there between you and this man, which should make you look so different?"

"Nothing!" returned the girl, throwing her head back. "What should there be between us?"

"That is a question easily answered. He is your uncle's secretary, and it is in that character that he should stand to you. But I tell you candidly, Ermentrude, I am afraid of you. Your love of admiration is so great that heaven only knows the mischief it might have led you into if I had not kept such a vigilant watch upon you. You surely cannot have been so foolish, so utterly foolish, as to have even a flirtation with this young man?"

"What nonsense you talk!" was the young lady's filial reply. "I wonder what you will next accuse me of!"

"He is handsome!" added Mrs. Seymour, speaking half to herself; "and he looks as if he would make a very Romeo of a lover; but to permit even his admiration—oh! it would be madness, madness!"

"Of course it would," retorted Ermentrude, sharply, "don't you think I am sharp enough to see that?"

"I should think so; only girls always are, and I suppose always will be foolish. They think they know better than their mothers, and as a consequence fall into all sorts of mischief."

And with this parting truism she left the room, haunted by a vague fear, which even Ermentrude's denial had not set at rest.

Ermentrude was not so conscientious that she would hesitate at an untruth if it suited her purpose to tell one, and of this weakness her mother was fully aware. Indeed, it had been the task of her life to keep Sir Traviçe in ignorance of his niece's somewhat lax notions, for he himself was scrupulously particular in such matters, and would not have uttered a lie, though he had known it would bring him all the wealth and honour of the world.

While this conversation was taking place in the boudoir, another of a very different kind was in process downstairs, where Sir Traviçe and Wise, the detective, were in consultation.

The latter had been sent for by the Baronet, who was growing impatient at his lack of success in discovering Lord St. Croix's assailant.

"It seems to me that you have found out just nothing at all," he said, pacing the library where the interview took place. "Some weeks have now elapsed, and you have not even obtained a clue."

"I did not say so, Sir Traviçe."

The Baronet stopped, and faced him in some excitement.

"Do you mean then, that you have a clue?"

"I believe so!" was the cautious retort.

"Then why did you not tell me of it before?"

"Because I wanted, and want still, to make quite sure before disclosing anything. You see, Sir Traviçe, in affairs such as these you cannot be too careful, and secrecy is absolutely essential to ultimate success. If I were to tell you what I have discovered, you might tell it in confidence to Lord St. Croix, seeing that he is the person most interested; he in turn might tell it to the young lady he is engaged to, and she to her mother, so that in the end everybody would know it, and in time it would leak out to the servants, and so all my plans would be quite upset."

The Baronet nodded thoughtfully.

"There is something in what you say, no doubt, but if you like, I am willing to give you a promise not to repeat your disclosure."

"Thank you, Sir Traviçe, but if you will allow me to keep it to myself for a few more days, I shall be much obliged, and I don't think in the end you will find your confidence misplaced. I can quite understand that you are growing impatient, and think I am doing very little for my money, but if I don't lay my hand on the person who fired the pistol at Lord St. Croix, why then, I shan't expect you to give me one farthing. I can't say fairer than that—now can I, sir?"

Thus pressed, Sir Traviçe yielded, and Wise was permitted to keep to himself his alleged discoveries—of which, in good truth, the Baronet was inclined to think somewhat lightly, for he was of opinion that if the detective had really obtained a clue he would have endeavoured to justify his apparent non-success by telling it, especially under the seal of confidence.

Mr. Wise had certainly not the air of a business man, for his custom was to loiter idly about, joking and chatting with the servants, with the gardeners, with even Lord St. Croix, or the Italian secretary, or Miss Sey-

mour herself, when occasions for meeting them were given him.

It is true he was up early and late; his favourite time for sauntering about the grounds was from eleven to twelve o'clock at night, and from five to six in the morning; and on the particular evening of which we write he was in the plantation at about eleven o'clock, when he suddenly came into violent collision with a dark body, which, on inspection, proved to be one of the footmen.

"Now then!" cried Wise, explosively. "What the deuce do you mean by tearing along in that insane fashion, I should like to know?"

"You'd tear along too, if you'd seen what I've seen," answered the footman, with a quaver in his voice, and catching hold of the detective's shoulder as if glad of the support. "I shall give warning to-morrow—I've a good mind I'd leave straight off, wages or no wages, for what's the good of a pound or two more or less if you're to be frightened out of your wits in the earning of it?"

"What do you mean?"

"I means what I says—so there, Mr. Wise."

The detective administered a good shake to the somewhat incoherent servant—apparently by way of infusing a degree of common sense into him.

"You've been drinking, John Jones."

"Pon my say so, I haven't," earnestly asseverated the maligned John Jones. "Flesh and blood I don't mind, and I'll knock down the first as says I do; but when it comes to ghosts and ghostesses, it's an entirely different matter, and I don't mind confessing that my knees shook to that extent that I could hardly run away."

"But what have you seen?"

"Haven't I been a telling of you? Why a ghost, for sure and certain."

"Where?"

"Just out there, beyond the plantation."

"Are you speaking the truth, or are you only frightened by what you've heard the other servants saying?"

"It's the gospel truth, Mr. Wise, and of that I'll take my dying davy."

"But what kind of figure was it—a man or a woman?"

"It wasn't neither the one nor the other—it was a ghost."

"But there are male ghosts and female ghosts, I suppose?"

"Are there? I didn't know it, and I don't want to know nothing at all about them. This was a long, white creature, and it came right out of the ground, before my very eyes."

"And you ran away?"

"So would you have ran away, I guess, or anyone else with an ounce of brains in their heads," returned Mr. Jones, with offended dignity. "I knew when I was well off, and it's a good thing for me I escaped when I did. Why, I have heard tell of people being struck silly at seeing such a sight."

"Perhaps there was no necessity for the operation in your case," observed the detective, drily. "You can't tell me, then, where the ghost disappeared to?"

"No, sir, I can't; and if you'll let go of my arm I shall be glad to get back into the house. It's time all respectable people were abed."

Wise replied to this shaft of satire with a good-humoured laugh.

"Not so bad for you, Mr. Jones. Well, get on home, and I'll see if I can unearth this ghost of yours."

As soon as the footman had disappeared he walked with swift, silent footsteps along the plantation, until he came to the very spot on which Lord St. Croix had stood when startled by the apparition—or whatever else it might have been. Arrived here, the detective cast a quick glance round, and then proceeded to ensconce himself in the lilac bushes, which very effectually concealed him from view.

"If anyone has left the house they will probably return to it through this gate, and then it will be a strange thing if I can't find

out who the ghost really is," he said to himself, preparing to wait with all the patience he could command.

Luckily for him the night was warm, and there was just sufficient light to enable him to distinguish objects with tolerable accuracy.

Above his head a bat was circling round and round, and occasionally the night silence was broken by the weird, discordant shriek of an owl, or some other nocturnal bird, as it pounced upon its prey.

By-and-by, the stable clock struck the half-hour—half past eleven; then once again—this time a quarter to twelve. Just as the strokes were dying away there came the faintest possible rustling of leaves, as if the skirt of a woman's dress, or some other piece of drapery, had caught against a bush, lightly stirring the foliage.

The detective was immediately on the alert, and looked forth from his place of concealment. There, a few paces from the lilac bush, was a tall white figure, vague as to outline, and indeed almost shapeless. It paused for a moment nearly opposite the gate, and then seemed to disappear in the earth.

"By Jove! This is a rum go!" muttered the unseen watcher; but he was an eminently practical man, and perhaps not altogether unused to "rum goes," so he quietly left his concealment, and went straight to the spot on which the figure had stood before vanishing.

As he looked round with his usual instinctive caution, his eye fell on a tiny fragment of something white, caught on the thorn of a bramble, and of this he quickly possessed himself.

It proved, on examination, to be an atom of lace—very fine and expensive lace, as Mr. Wise was skilled enough to know, and he put it carefully away in his pocket-book with a satisfied smile on his lips.

"Either Mrs. Seymour or Miss Seymour," he said to himself; "it's one of the two."

And then he went down on his hands and knees, and he examined the ground by the light of a dark lantern he had produced from his pocket—examined it, not hurriedly, as Lord St. Croix had done, but very minutely, inch by inch, like some Red Indian searching out the trail of his enemy.

At last a very curious discovery rewarded his efforts, and, accustomed as the detective had grown to strange results, he was hardly prepared for this one. He found that a tree, quite close to the spot where he had seen the unearthly-looking figure disappear, was hollow, and that at the back of it—that is to say, on the side farthest from the gate leading into the plantation—there was an aperture large enough to admit any ordinary sized man or woman. Nor was this all, for inside the aperture was a well, or what was supposed to be a well, for it was now empty, and it was doubtful, indeed, whether it had ever been otherwise.

"Hum!" muttered Wise, after making as close an investigation as circumstances permitted. "Probably this leads to a subterranean passage, connected with the vaults that I have heard are built under the Court, and the supposed ghost has taken advantage of it, because it gives her—I'm sure it is a she—the chance of going in and out when she likes without being observed. A clever woman—a very clever woman indeed, and a brave one, too, but I shall be even with her yet, or my name's not Jonathan Wise. How she gets up and down puzzles me, though."

With the aid of his lantern he again pursued his investigations, in which he was now thoroughly interested; and certainly, if he did not succeed in the task he had set himself, it would not be for want of zeal and perseverance.

CHAPTER XXIV.

On the following morning, as they were at breakfast, a man rode up hastily to the front door of Woodleigh Court, and dismounting,

asked to see Sir Travice on business of the utmost importance.

"Dear me!" said Ermentrude, who had heard the request. "I wonder what is the matter at Wyndham Abbey—for the man is one of Squire Wyndham's servants, and he looked as if he were the bearer of ill news."

Sir Travice—who, it may be observed, was one of the county magistrates—got up, and went out into the hall where the messenger (who was no other than the under-keeper, Dale) was waiting, looking, as Ermentrude had remarked, pale and frightened.

"If you please, Sir Travice," he began, touching his hat, "Miss Marjorie sent me to ask you to come over without delay, for an awful thing has happened, and the poor Squire is so upset that he doesn't know what to do!"

"An awful thing! What do you mean, Dale?"

"It's murder, Sir Travice!" answered the man, lowering his voice, as if the words were too terrible to be spoken aloud.

The Baronet started back in horror.

"Murder, Dale!"

"Yes, sir, nothing more nor less, and it's the poor lady who lived at the Lodge—Mrs. Fanning she called herself, although goodness only knows what her real name may have been!"

"And she is dead, you say?"

"Dead as a door-nail—begging your pardon, sir—stabbed to the heart with some foreign sort of knife—a dagger or stiletto, or something of that kind—which went clean through her breast, and must have killed her at once, poor thing!"

"Good heavens!" murmured the Baronet, sinking into an armchair, and rendered momentarily powerless by the awful nature of the intelligence just given him.

Murder read of in the newspaper, and murder committed within a mile or so of your own door are widely different things, and the Baronet, whose magisterial experiences had dealt for the most part with poaching delinquencies, and refractory labourers and school-boys who employed their leisure in swarming lamp-posts and throwing stones, felt himself actually helpless before this terrible calamity.

At that moment the breakfast-room door opened, and the secretary Villari came out. Sir Travice, who was really rather attached to him, signalled him to his side, and in few words repeated Dale's story, which, it is needless to say, the Italian received with a horror similar to his own.

"I suppose I shall have to go over to Wyndham Abbey, and see what is to be done," added the Baronet, slowly recovering from his helpless amazement. "Not that I am likely to be of much use, seeing that I have never been concerned in such a case before; but it will be better than leaving the poor Squire all to himself. Will you tell Jenkins to saddle Castor immediately?"

"Did you not send Jenkins in to Blackminster this morning to fetch the books which were to arrive from London?" asked the secretary, in his customary soft and respectful voice.

"Oh, yes—I had forgotten. And the other groom is ill. How tiresome!" exclaimed the Baronet, in vexation. "I dare not trust one of the stable-boys to saddle Castor, so I suppose I must do it myself."

"I will do it if you will allow me," observed Villari, and Sir Travice at once consented, glad to be relieved from the trouble.

"Now tell me all you know about this terrible affair?" he said to Dale, after the secretary had disappeared in the direction of the stables.

"It is not much, Sir Travice, all told. It seems that Mrs. Fanning kept one little servant, a girl out of the village, named Bessie Webber, and yesterday this girl asked if she might go and see her sister, who was very ill. Her mistress gave her leave, and also said she might stay the night with her sister if she would be back in time to light the fire in the

morning, and get breakfast, which Bessie promised to do. Well, she went away about seven o'clock in the evening, leaving a visitor with Mrs. Fanning, and she came back at half-past six this morning, having sat up all night with her sick sister. To her surprise she found the front door unlocked, but still it did not make her suspicious, for you know how careless we all are about locks and bolts and that sort of thing in the country, sir, and so she went on into the kitchen, where everything was just as usual, and lighted the kitchen fire, and made a cup of tea, which she proceeded to carry to her mistress according to custom. But when she got to the bedroom she discovered it was empty, and more than that, the bed had never been slept in, so she became rather alarmed, and hurried downstairs to the little parlour, and there she found her mistress—"

"Dead?"

"Yes, sir, quite dead and cold, lying on the floor, just as she had fallen, with the dagger beside her. Luckily, the girl was too frightened to move her, but she touched her cheek, and found it was icy, so from that she concluded she must be dead, and came running out into the wood to my cottage, which was nearest. And when I heard what she had got to say, I sent her on up to the Abbey, while I rode off into Blackminster to get Doctor Dawson, and to give the news at the police station. The doctor was at home, and came back with me, and we went together to the Lodge. He said the poor lady must have been dead some hours, for she was quite stiff, but that probably she passed away without so much as a sigh, for the knife had been driven in by a swift, sure hand, and death had been instantaneous."

"Poor thing! poor thing!" muttered Sir Travice.

He did not know the murdered woman, but surely death is that one touch of nature, which makes the whole world kin, and be the victim noble or humble, a sigh of pity is the least requiem we can give them.

A sudden idea struck him, and he got up.

"I will go round to the stables; and mount there," he said, "for if the ladies were to see me go off in such a hurry they would be alarmed, and I should have to tell them what was the matter."

"They will have to know, I suppose, sir!" observed the gamekeeper, respectfully.

"Yes! but I shall leave it to Mr. Villari to tell them, and he will break the news more gently than I should have time to do," answered the Baronet, leading the way to the stable-yard, where the secretary was holding a saddled horse by the bridle, and doing his best to soothe the animal, who appeared to be rather restive.

"I can't make out what ails Castor this morning," he remarked. "I fancy you have not been riding him lately, for he seems excited. No doubt a good gallop will do him good."

"He had no exercise yesterday, so that explains it," replied Sir Travice, carelessly; for his mind was too intent on the crime which it would be his duty to investigate, to dwell on the temper of his horses, and as he spoke he sprang into the saddle with considerably more lightness and agility than might have been expected from a man of his age, while the secretary stood watching him rather anxiously.

"I don't like the looks of that horse," he said, stepping back a few paces. "He is certainly fresher than he need be. Will you let me saddle one of the others for you, Sir Travice?"

"Certainly not. It is not the first time I have mounted a spirited horse, and I don't in the least suppose Castor will prove too much for me. You are too nervous, Villari," said the Baronet, smiling with a slight consciousness of his good horsemanship.

At that moment Wise came sauntering slowly across the stable-yard, and the Baronet, seeing him, said to Villari,—

"Tell Wise about the murder, and ask him

to follow us on to Wyndham Abbey. If he takes the short cut through the wood he will probably be there almost as soon as we shall, and it is just possible he may afford us some assistance. Not," he added, *sotto voce*, "that I think he is particularly expert in his profession."

The secretary nodded, and then the Baronet rode off, and was presently joined by Dale, who had gone round to the front of the house, and mounted his own horse during the colloquy that had just taken place between the Baronet and his secretary.

Sir Travice beckoned him to come up to his side.

"I suppose," he said, "you have no idea who the wretch was, that committed the murder?"

The gamekeeper hesitated ever so slightly. "Well, sir, I have my own opinion on the subject, but if you don't mind I would rather keep it to myself, for I shouldn't like to say anything that would prejudice you against one who may be as innocent as you or me, and it's quite true I have very little ground for my suspicions."

"Quite right, Dale!" said Sir Travice, heartily. "I cannot blame your caution, and I shall doubtless learn all there is to be learnt presently from Squire Wyndham."

"It was Miss Marjorie that sent me to you, not the Squire," interpolated Dale, with some haste. "That Mr. Geoffrey Wyndham, who is staying at the Abbey—and behaves just as if he was lord and master over everything—was rather against my coming, but Miss Marjorie didn't take the least notice of what he said, but just said, in her quiet, proud way, 'You go to Woodleigh Court, Dale, and ask Sir Travice to help us in our trouble,' and glad enough I was to hear her speak out like that, for—that horse of yours is very spirited, sir?"

This last remark was caused by Castor suddenly rearing straight up, and with such vigour that the Baronet was nearly thrown from the saddle. He recovered himself almost immediately, but there were traces of uneasiness visible in his face, as he gathered the reins more closely in his hands.

"Yes; I can't make it out, for as a rule he is quite easily managed. Perhaps in talking to you I pulled the curb, and that upset his temper. He'll be all right presently."

But he was not all right; he pranced and curvetted about, and tossed his head, and coquetted with his shadow, and the Baronet had quite as much as he could do to keep his seat.

"I say, Dale!" he exclaimed at last, struck by a sudden idea, "just ride on in front, and see if this animal has a white star on his forehead. I have been thinking that perhaps Villari has saddled Pollux instead of Castor."

The gamekeeper did as he was bidden.

"No, Sir Travice; the white star is there."

Sir Travice looked relieved, for they were now coming to a field in which a threshing machine was at work, and good horseman as he was, he would certainly have refused to ride Pollux past it.

"It's all play," he explained to Dale, "the horse has really no vice in him."

"Hum," muttered the keeper, grimly. "I'm not so sure of that, sir, for I don't at all like the look of the whites of his eyes that he is showing. If he ain't vicious he looks it."

Hardly had the words passed his lips than the horse shied at the machine, and began rearing so violently that it is no exaggeration to say he actually stood upright on his hind legs.

The keeper urged his own steed forward, and endeavoured to snatch at the bridle, but before he could accomplish this, the end he had feared arrived, and Sir Travice was thrown violently from his saddle, and lay senseless in the middle of the road, while the horse, infuriated by the whirr-r-r of the threshing machine, started off at a mad gallop, which soon took him out of sight.

But he was not lost, for, as it happened, Wise—who had taken the short cut through the wood—came out of the gate just as the animal, covered with foam, and its sides panting, stopped from sheer exhaustion at the top of a rather steep hill. The detective, who was more or less used to horses, contrived to catch hold of the reins—which attention the animal acknowledged by lashing out with his forelegs.

"Hulloa!" said Wise, dodging with much agility. "I fear our friend the Italian made a mistake while saddling the horse, for judging from his behaviour this must be Pollux, and not Castor, and I'm afraid something bad must have happened to Sir Travice."

He was of course aware of the point of difference between the two animals—namely, the white star on the forehead, and as he concluded this reflection, put up his finger and touched the mark.

It was stiff and sticky, and something white came off on his finger.

"Ah! I thought so. Trickery has been at work, and the star has been painted. Who has done it, I wonder. Mrs. Seymour, or that smooth-spoken Italian? Whoever it is, I'm afraid their villainous design has been only too successful, but I'm blessed!—only the detective used another adjective—"if I don't run 'em to earth, and make 'em suffer for it in the end!"

CHAPTER XXV.

IRENE, after drinking the coffee, had just strength enough to struggle upstairs, and was met on the landing by the dirty little servant, Euphemia, who, seeing how pale and dazed-looking she was, gave her her arm into the bedroom.

"Ain't you well?" she asked, with some concern, for she had taken a strange kind of fancy to Irene, whose delicate loveliness she regarded as she might have regarded some wonderful tropical flower, such as she had never before seen. "Are ye sick?"

"Very, and frightened—oh, so frightened!" exclaimed the young girl, with a sudden access of terror for which she herself could hardly have accounted. It may be that, in a vague sort of way, she suspected some opiate had been administered to her, and she was filled with such bewildered helplessness as comes to us when we find ourselves in the dark, and in a perfectly strange place, where a step forward or backward may lead us into untold peril. "I feel no sleepy that I cannot keep awake, and I don't know what may happen to me if I once become insensible. Can't you help me—oh! can't you help me?"

Evidently the drug had already had some of its effect on her senses, or she would not have made this appeal to a creature well-nigh as helpless as herself. But as poverty gives us strange companions, so may desperation lead us to strange friends.

Euphemia shook her head.

"What can I do, miss? I might run and fetch a bobby if you liked, tho' Mrs. Marlow would beat me within an inch of my life afterwards."

"It would be no good," sighed Irene, heavily, but struggling with all her might against the deadly snore that was creeping over her. "If anyone came, Mrs. Sumner would have some plausible tale ready, so as to prevent interference and it would only make matters worse. I feel I shall be fast asleep in a few moments. Will you stay with me as long as you can?"

"Yes, till they make me go away," responded Euphemia. Then a happy thought struck her. "If you feel sleepy and don't want to go to sleep, why don't you splash your head in cold water?"

The suggestion was a good one, and Irene went to the little washstand and poured the water over her golden head, first of all unfastening her dress, and slipping it down on her shoulders, so as not to wet it. As she did

so a card fell out and lay on the ground at her feet, until it was observed and picked up by Euphemia.

But whatever effect cold water may have in driving away a natural sleepiness, it was useless against the subtle influence of the drug Mrs. Sumner had administered, and even while she bent her head over the basin Irene felt that the effort would be in vain.

"It is no good," she murmured, drowsily, and even while she spoke she staggered towards the bed, fell across it, and in a few more seconds was in a profound slumber.

Euphemia remained for a little while, gazing at her in most unmitigated perplexity. That some kind of treachery had been going on she felt assured; but however much she might wish to assist the poor, pretty victim, she was virtually helpless, for who would believe her word when it was flatly contradicted by her mistress—as would surely be the case?

Besides, what was there for her to say? That a girl had been brought to the house, and had fallen into a sleep which she—Euphemia—did not believe to be natural!

A policeman would pooh-pooh the story, and the neighbours would most certainly decline to interfere in such a matter.

"Poor thing!" muttered Euphemia. "She looks for all the world like a waxwork."

The comparison was not a very apt one, for although Irene's eyes were closed, and the long velvet shadow of her dark lashes lay on her cheek, her expression was still one of troubled perplexity, and there was a little line in the smooth whiteness of her brow.

But, for all that, she looked inexpressibly lovely. There was a faint, wild rose-colour in her cheeks, and her finely-chiselled lips were slightly apart, while her white bosom heaved rather more quickly than it would have done had her sleep been perfectly natural.

"I'd help her if I could," soliloquised Euphemia, biting her nails in uncertainty. "She's so sweet and pretty, poor thing! But I don't see what I can do—really I don't."

Her eyes suddenly fell on the card she had picked up, and which she now held in her hand. As it happened, she could read and write a little, having in her early childhood been sent to a board school, before she fell into the tender clutches of Mrs. Marlow of course.

"H-a-r-o-l-d S-t. O-r-o-i-x," she spelled out, slowly. "Harold St. Orotch! Well, that's a funny name! 'Carlton Club.' Where's that, I wonder?"

She remained pondering for a few minutes, staring intently at the card the while.

"P'raps he's a friend of hers—p'raps he's her young man! That's most likely, considering that she kept his card inside her body, and if that's so, I'd better write to him. Anyhow, I'll keep the address, and wait and see what happens."

She had hardly arrived at this conclusion before the door was pushed stealthily open, and Mrs. Sumner walked on tip-toe into the chamber.

"Hulloa! What brings you here?" she asked, by no means pleased to see this apartment already invaded.

"The young lady was took bad, and I helped her," answered Euphemia, sulkily. "I don't believe as it's all right with her. Hadn't I better go and fetch a doctor?"

"A doctor! Certainly not. What do we want with a doctor? The young lady is all right, as you could see if you had any brains in your stupid head. There! get along downstairs to your work, instead of lazing here."

As the girl evinced no symptoms of obeying this mandate, the speaker took her by the shoulders, and forcibly pushed her outside the door to the top of the stairs.

"Mrs. Marlow," she called out, "Here's this servant of yours idling away her time up here. Haven't you anything for her to do downstairs?"

"To be sure I have, the lazy hussy!"

promptly responded Mrs. Marlow, appearing at the foot of the stairs. "You come and wash up in the kitchen, you impudent thing, you! What do you mean skulking about in the lady's room, when there's enough work to last you a fortnight? D'ye think I pay you your wages for doing nothin' but eat and drink as much as ever you can, and then cheek me? I'll give it you when I gets hold of you, see if I don't!"

Euphemia hesitated a moment between the angry woman at the bottom of the stairs and the quietly determined one at the top. She was between Scylla and Charybdis, but of the two she preferred the former, so she slipped quietly down, neatly dodged Mrs. Marlow's threatening arm, and went to the dirty little dark hole, dignified by the name of kitchen, whither her mistress followed, and watched over her while she "washed up."

And so poor Irene was entirely at the mercy of her enemies.

When her senses returned to her, she found herself in the dark, and in a strange place, for as her eyes gradually became accustomed to the gloom she managed to distinguish the form of the objects about her, and they certainly did not represent the little bedroom in which she had slept at Mrs. Marlow's.

"Where am I—who is here?" she cried out, breathlessly, for some instinct told her she was not alone, and as she spoke she raised herself on her elbow, and tried to look around.

"Oh, so you are awake!" said the voice of Mrs. Sumner from the other side of the cabin—for such it was. "You needn't think of getting up yet—it is quite early, so go to sleep again."

"But where am I?"

"Don't ask questions now. I am sleepy myself, and when morning comes I'll explain your position to you," was the reply, and as she spoke Mrs. Sumner turned over, apparently for the purpose of resuming her broken slumber—secure in the belief that her prisoner could not escape, for the very simple reason that the door was locked, and the key reposed under her own pillow.

Irene was silent, conscious that remonstrance would be useless, but she listened intently, and presently became aware that they must either be on a river or the sea, for she distinctly heard the wash of the water against the vessel's side, and as she became more fully awake felt the motion of the ship itself.

Then her suspicion had been correct, and she had been drugged in order to be got on board this vessel, which was bearing her away from England—away from all chances of help!

Her heart sank with a terrible sense of desolation and despair. Never till now had she thoroughly realised the perfect helplessness of her position, but with the sudden consciousness of how pitilessly Mrs. Sumner accomplished her will came a sickening terror of this quiet, grim woman, who hesitated at nothing that stood in her path, and swept all obstacles aside with the supremacy of Fate itself.

She sprang up and groped about in the darkness until she came to the door, which of course resisted all her efforts to unfasten, and then she crept quietly back to her berth, and lay there till morning, a dumb misery filling her breast, and a sort of apathetic resignation to a destiny which it seemed useless to try and resist.

At length the cold, grey dawn gave place to morning light, but the cabin was still in semi-darkness, for the skylight above was covered over, and, added to this, the morning itself was damp and misty.

Mrs. Sumner, who had not even unfastened her dress while she slept, rose, and lighted a small hanging lamp, and then proceeded to wash herself, and smooth her hair before a tiny pocket mirror with which she had provided herself. After this she turned to Irene, who was lying with miserable, wide-open eyes in her berth.

"You had better get up, and arrange your

toilet," she observed, in her usual quiet tones; "meanwhile I will go and see about some breakfast."

She was absent about ten minutes, and on her return found the girl still in the same position—indeed, she seemed in a sort of lethargy, and almost unconscious of what was going on around her.

"Still under the influence of the opiate," reflected Mrs. Sumner. "It is just as well, for it will keep her quiet, and perhaps I shall not have to give her another dose."

A loud she said,—

"Won't you have something to eat, Irene?"

The girl made a movement of dissent—the sight of food at the present moment almost made her sick.

"Drink some coffee, then."

But the remembrance of the last coffee she had taken induced her to refuse this also, and so Mrs. Sumner sat down, and had her breakfast alone.

At last Irene spoke.

"What is the time?"

Mrs. Sumner glanced at the neat little silver watch she wore at her waist.

"It is half-past eight."

Again there was silence, and it lasted for about half-an-hour, and was finally broken by the elder woman, who had by this time finished her breakfast.

"Do you know where you are, Irene?"

"No," apathetically. "On my way to Australia, perhaps."

"As it happens, you are right," was the calm retort. "I did not think that I ought to let your scruples interfere with what I knew to be best for you, and so I have taken measures which you may think harsh, but which you will later on confess were for your truest interest."

A faintly scornful smile played round the young girl's mouth, but it vanished almost directly.

"And are you coming too?" she asked.

"No, but James Marlow is the commander of this vessel, and he will take care of you, and see you safely into the hands of the friends who are ready to receive you at Melbourne."

Irene shivered, and her eyelids were raised for a moment, while a flash came in her blue eyes that the woman watching her could hardly understand.

"You will write to me when you get to Melbourne," added Mrs. Sumner, in the same equable tone as she had before spoken in, "and direct the letter to the care of Mrs. Marlow, for I am going to leave W—shire, and for the present shall have no definite address. In due time it is possible I may come to Australia to you, but it will not be yet—not for a year or two certainly."

Still no reply from the quiet recumbent figure.

"I am sure that when you get out there you will be grateful to me for sending you. It is possible that some respectable man of your own class may fall in love with you, and wish to make you his wife, and in that case you must let me know, so that I may send you the wedding present I have put by in these savings bank for you. It is not much, it is true—a hundred and fifty pounds, perhaps—but it is better than nothing at all, and will help to set you up in housekeeping. I—"

"Stop!" cried Irene, with sharp authority, and she rose from her berth and stood up, steadying herself (for she was still giddy) by the edge of the table. "Since I am in your power, and—as it seems—beyond the reach of help, you shall at least hear my true sentiments towards you, so that if you have any idea you have imposed on my credulity with your hypocrisy you may for once be undeceived. You have caught me as a hunter snares his victim, and I am equally helpless in your hands, but never for one moment have you made me think you have any interest in my welfare, or any feeling for me beyond a sincere desire never to look upon my face again. In point of fact, you hate me! I see

it in your eyes, I hear it in your voice, and I feel it in my own heart. Well, it simply means that I am alone in the world, and have no friend to look to for help, but at the same time I have no responsibilities, for I owe you no duty, and therefore your wishes will have no effect whatever on my actions. You may send me to Australia, but I shall return at the very first opportunity, and it shall be the business of my life to discover your motive for getting rid of me. It may be true that I am your sister's daughter—although I doubt the fact—but there is, there must be, some other reason for your conduct, and I will find it out!"

As she was speaking, Mrs. Sumner had started to her feet, and in her rage she let slip the mask she had hitherto worn so carefully. Her eyes actually blazed with malignancy, her very lips grew pale, and trembled, white with excess of fury.

"You little fiend!" she cried out, seizing Irene's arm, and bruising the delicate flesh in her rough grasp. "How dare you go on defying me? Have I not shown you that I am your master—aye, and will continue to be so to the end of the chapter!"

The girl never flinched, but returned her gaze with undaunted courage.

"We shall see," she returned. "Loose your hold of my arm, if you please—you hurt me!"

The woman flung the bruised wrist from her, and then recovered her self-possession.

"Why do you make me so angry, Irene? Your abominable obstinacy forces me to speak and act toward you in a manner that is repugnant to me. I am your friend, and yet you could not treat your cruellest enemy with more contempt."

Irene did not reply, but proceeded to fasten up the long golden strands of her hair that were now falling loosely over her shoulders. She had said all she wished to say, and it was not worth while wasting any more words, seeing that they had no greater effect than rain on a rock.

By this time the influence of the drug was wearing off, and her thoughts had, in a degree, collected themselves. She did not feel quite so helpless as she had done in the first moments of awakening, and had determined to go on deck, and see if she could not prevail on the captain or some of the men to aid her. It was a very slender thread of hope on which to rely, but drowning men will clutch at straws when there is nothing else to hold by.

Presently Mrs. Sumner got up, and left the cabin, and Irene immediately flew to the door, and tried it. Alas! it was bolted on the outside, and as there was no other exit, escape seemed impossible.

The girl stood a moment, debating with herself, then raised her voice, and screamed as loudly as she could—again, and again, and again—until she grew exhausted, but her screams elicited no response whatever, and finally she ceased, and began shaking the door with all her strength, in the hope that the bolt might possibly be a slender one, and yield to her efforts.

But this attempt was equally vain. Still she did not feel nearly so despairing as she had done at first, for the mere sense of making an effort helped to raise her spirits; and, besides, it seemed impossible that in this nineteenth century of ours, any girl could be kidnapped and sent away to a foreign land against her will, no matter what the power of her unscrupulous enemies might be.

In about an hour Mrs. Sumner returned, and this time with her bonnet and cloak on, for Marlow had told her that as they had a fair wind, it was probable the tug would cast them off very soon, and she must therefore prepare herself for an immediate departure.

"I hope that by this time you have convinced yourself of the folly of making such a noise," she observed calmly. "Luckily no one has taken any notice of you, for the crew believe you to be a sister of Marlow's, who is occasionally not quite right in her head, and who he is taking out to Australia for the

benefit of her health, so that any efforts on your part to undeceive them will be worse than useless, and any pitiful story you may choose to relate will only serve to convince them the more of your insanity. You see I have guarded against all contingencies that I have been able to foresee, and now that I am going to leave you I want to shake hands and bid you an affectionate good-bye, in the perfect assurance that presently you will regard me with friendly feelings, and even thank me for all the trouble I have taken for you."

The woman kept up her hypocrisy to the last, and spoke with a quiet assumption of good faith that might actually have deceived an onlooker had there been one present.

Irene cast upon her a glance of deepest scorn.

"I shall neither shake hands with you, nor wish you good-bye," she responded, quietly, "for to do either would be a spoken or an acted falsehood. So far your wickedness has triumphed, but"—she raised her finger to give emphasis to her words—"I am convinced that such wickedness will in the end provoke Heaven's vengeance, and I must be content to wait until that day comes."

Mrs. Sumner's eyes drooped uneasily before the young girl's steadfast gaze, and—perhaps to avoid it—she went over to the berth on which she had slept the preceding night, to pick up a handkerchief that was lying on the pillow.

In so doing her back was turned for a moment to Irene, who was thus nearer to the door, and who instantly took advantage of the fact to open it, and rush up the stairs on deck, where the first person she saw was a rough-looking sailor, who stopped short in amazement at so unexpected an apparition.

Excitement and the new-born hope of escape lent a certain wildness to the young girl's face and manner, and as she clasped the man's arm, with a frantic resolve that he should listen to her, he drew back, as if startled.

"Help me, oh, help me!" she cried, incoherently, for even as she spoke she saw Marlow advancing from the other end of the vessel. "I have been brought here by foul means, and they intend to take me to Australia. You who have sisters, or perhaps a wife of your own, have pity on me, and help me to escape them!"

Naturally her appeal, piteous as it was, sounded strange and even mad in the ears of the very practical and matter-of-fact person to whom it was addressed, and who looked exceedingly puzzled at the sudden and barely comprehended request.

"All right, missie," he replied, soothingly. "You ain't quite well now, perhaps, but you'll be all right presently. Why, bless ye! the voyage ain't nothink, and as for sea-sickness, it only lasts three days at the most, and when ye gets to Australia, you'll be that glad to leave England behind yer—"

He did not complete his sentence, for at that moment Marlow and Mrs. Sumner both stood at the girl's side, and the former said,—

"All right, Smith, the young lady's a bit off her head, so you musn't take any notice of what she says. We're hoping great things from the Australian climate. Come, my dear," to Irene, "let me take you downstairs again; you had much better stay quietly in your cabin until we get well out to sea, and then you may come on deck as often as you like."

He took her by the arm, but the touch of an adder could not have inspired the girl with more repulsion, and shaking him off she sprang across the deck, and stood on the bulwarks, for she had seen another vessel astern, and it struck her that if she could only attract the attention of the captain or crew there might still be hope for her.

It was a sight never to be forgotten, that slight, girlish figure standing between the sea and sky, with arms outstretched, and wildly despairing blue eyes.

Another moment, and the slender form swayed unsteadily to and fro; a loud, piercing

cry rang out on the morning stillness, and Irene overbalanced herself, and fell into the spray-crested billows, that were breaking against the vessel's side.

CHAPTER XXVI.

Wise was not so foolish as to attempt to mount the horse he had captured, even though the animal bore marks of evident exhaustion, consequent on his mad race uphill.

The detective, although physically brave enough, had yet a very considerable regard for his own safety, and there was still a vicious exhibition of the whites of the eyes on the part of the animal, which warned him against giving him another chance of working mischief.

He therefore led him back along the highway to Woodleigh Court, and as he neared the house was met by Dale the keeper, now on his way to Wyndham Abbey.

"Where's Sir Travice?" asked Wise, coming to a standstill.

"In bed. We have just brought him home in a dogcart that Farmer Owen lent us—it was near his house that Sir Travice was thrown."

"And is he hurt much?"

"A good deal, I'm afraid. The doctor has been sent for, but he hasn't come yet. However, Sir Travice seems to have gained consciousness, and we'll hope his hurt isn't serious. It's a wonder he didn't break his neck, though."

"How did the accident happen?" asked Wise.

"I can't stay to give you particulars now, for Miss Marjorie will be wondering what has become of me, but the horse shied at a threshing machine—not that the threshing machine had much to do with the accident, for the brute was vicious enough to have shied at his own shadow, or a bird on a bush—never saw such a creature in my life. I warned Sir Travice, but he pooh poohed what I said—more's the pity. I hope he'll get well, though, for he's a good sort, and there aren't many like him."

And with that the gamekeeper rode off, while Wise slowly led the horse round to the stable, thoughtfully deliberating the while.

The detective was in a dilemma. Convinced that treachery had been at work, and that the Baronet's accident was the result of deliberate intention, he yet could not make up his mind to whom he should confide his discovery, for, as a matter of fact, he was distrustful both of Mrs. Seymour and her daughter, and doubtful whether it would not be better to keep his newly-acquired knowledge to himself, as a trump card to play by-and-by at the end of the game.

And yet if he let the moment pass, when he could adduce proof of his words in the shape of the painted star on the horse's forehead, the culprit might escape, for supposing Mrs. Seymour knew anything about it she would certainly deny it, and his word would not be taken when distinctly contradicted by hers.

In the stable yard he met Lord St. Croix.

(To be continued.)

A FIRE EXTINGUISHER.—Mr. E. Martin, of Munich, manufactures a compound consisting chiefly of common salt, alum, soluble glass, and tungstate of soda, which has been introduced with great success in Austria and Switzerland for the extinction of fires, and is now being used in Germany, where the Admiralty have recommended it to their naval yards. It can be obtained in liquid or solid form, and is thrown on the fire either by a pump or from pails.

ANOTHER DAY.

—o—

ANOTHER day dawns, cold and grey,
As forth upon the world I look;
The earth, snow-clad, seems pale and sad,
The leafless trees by winds are shook.

Another day to find my way
O'er rugged paths so bleak and drear;
To blindly grope, and vainly hope
That, from my sky, the clouds may clear.

Ah, once I trod a flowery sod,
With hopeful heart so glad and gay;
While, overhead, blue skies were spread,
And sunshine flooded all my way.

But, sad and strange, with sudden change
My landscape grew a dreary waste;
The sunshine fled, and on my head
The storm-clouds broke in angry haste.

Still dangers throng; the way lies long
Up stony steep, o'er desert-plain.
What lies beyond? Oh, question fond
To which no answer yet I gain!

But this I know; that I must go
Until I reach the destined end;
The light may pale, my vision fail,
But I my way must onward wend.

But, as I toil o'er rocky soil,
With heavy heart and weary feet,
This thought brings cheer, each day I near
The rest that I shall find so sweet.

J. L.

OH! GIVE HIM BACK TO ME!

—o:—

CHAPTER XXXIV.

"WOULD I WERE A GIRL!"

"Now, my dear Violet, I insist upon your enjoying yourself to-night!" said Lady Stapleton, with a cheerful smile. "You are to forget everything that is unpleasant. You are to fancy yourself a girl again. You may flirt if you like just for once, if you will promise not to go too far, and you are absolutely to dance every dance."

"Antie, what are you thinking of?"

"Of you, child! I want that harum-scarum boy, Lord Belfeather, to enjoy his last evening in England; I want poor old Cyril to be reassured as to your lively proclivities; I want you to prove to the world that you are not a broken-hearted, deserted woman," her tone growing grave.

"But supposing I am?" with a deep sigh.

"I'm not going to suppose anything of the kind," briskly. "You are young, you are not in debt, you are immensely admired—what more can the heart of woman desire?"

"Oh! nothing, of course," with an inward glance at her own desolate heart, which told her that a woman wanted love more than all the rest—love which gives the glory of the dawn to the saddest and poorest of lives.

"Don't encourage Belfeather too much; remember the boy is not made of anything else than flesh and blood; and don't forget that an old friend may seem quite as dangerous to those who don't understand the position as the newest of acquaintances."

"Why this lecture? Have I done anything wrong?" looking up in surprise.

"No, my dear; only I told Cyril once that I wished he were ugly, and perhaps I should have more peace of mind if you were marked with the small-pox."

"Thank Heaven, I'm not!" and Violet laughed softly.

Beauty is a possession that often brings the owner into difficulties, and throws many obstacles into her way; but the woman does not exist who would willingly give it away to

secure herself from all perils and temptations.

"So I am to be a girl to-night!" Violet said to herself, as she stood before the long mirror, in which her own fair image was reflected. "Let me fancy myself free—my name still Mayne—my heart as light as it used to be when Gertrude and I played at being ballet-dancers in the nursery at home. It seems centuries ago, and how much I have lived through since then!" ending her smile with a sigh.

Her dress that night was white, ornamented with heartseases, shaded from violet to mauve, and graduated from the size of an ordinary saucer to that of a half-crown.

They looked exceedingly pretty amongst the folds of exquisite white lace, and there was a slight tinge of pink in her softly rounded cheeks which gave the finishing touch to her beauty.

Ralph Armitage was to be there, for Lady Stapleton in common courtesy could not leave him out; but both Belfeather and Cyril Landon had promised to act as bodyguard to the "queen of the evening," and he was not to be allowed a single chance of a tête à tête.

Other partners were to be ruthlessly sacrificed for the sake of keeping this pledge; and any amount of men would have been willing to do the same for Violet's face was enough to bewilder both hearts and brains.

Lady Jane had delayed her brother by telling him the wrong number of the house where she had been dining, and as it was in one of those interminable streets in South Kensington, and nobody seemed to know even a next-door neighbour, he had been obliged to drive from one end of the street to the other, whilst the footman knocked at every door in succession. His temper had not been sublime to begin with; but he was in a positive fury by the time the right house was actually found; and his sister, perfectly unconscious of the trick she had played him, came out to him with a laughing remark about the time. He answered her savagely, with a loud, fierce oath, which made her shiver. She knew that he used to swear when something tried him almost beyond endurance; but he always considered it childish to do so before a lady.

And now it was a sign that something had changed him terribly for the worse. What could it be? He had never been quite the same since that day when he stayed behind her for a few hours at the Priory; but it was the visit to Holly Bank which had seemed to have such disastrous consequences. He went there an ordinary English gentleman, a decent sort of brother, a tolerably pleasant companion. He came back a morose savage, without a civil word for anybody, not even for his only sister.

Was it a hopeless love that had altered him, or was there some terrible secret, as she often fancied, as she watched his haggard face, and saw his convulsive start at the most ordinary sounds, such as a sudden knock at the door, or else a violent ring at the bell?

These thoughts came pressing on her against her will, as she sat by his side in angry silence. She had apologised humbly for her mistake, and the apology had been so ungraciously received that she had said nothing since.

The long silence, and her unpleasant thoughts, made the way seem endless; and yet before, she had felt such happiness from a secret source, which she had revealed to no one, that she could almost have sung with joy.

The first person to welcome the brother and sister was Mr. Bertie Mayne, who received them looking as simple and innocent as the white rose in his button-hole. The colour rushed into Lady Jane's cheeks as she remembered her last conversation with him, and she made a dart at Lady Stapleton, who was standing near the door in a sumptuous violet velvet.

"Had good sport?" inquired Bertie, as! on malice intent, although he knew nothing of that run over to France; but somehow,

either intentionally or accidentally, he always trod upon the toe that hurt Ralph Armitage.

"Not altogether bad. How well this room lights up!" trying to edge his way further in, only a crowd happened to collect at the moment round the doorway.

"I forget where you went," pursued his tormentor. "Was it to your own place, or down in Warwickshire?"

"Not to our own—birds so wild. My father and six guns went out last week, and the bags were miserable!"

"Better in Warwickshire?"

"Yes—in parts."

"You always go to Alcester, don't you?"

"Y—yes, generally."

"How are the Manvilles?"

"Oh! all right," though he didn't know in the least. The look of surprise on Bertie's face showed he had made a wrong shot.

"I'm awfully glad to hear it!" he said, heartily. "I heard she was laid up with an attack of scarlet-fever."

"Oh! she was bad, of course. I was thinking of her husband. He has capital wine."

"You don't mean to say he has people to stay in the house? I heard it was shut off from all communication, even with the village!"

Ralph gave a sort of hunted look round on the smiling faces. Would nothing deliver him from this detestable man, who always seemed bent on torturing him?

"We didn't go into the house," he said, hurriedly, "we slept at the inn."

"Oh, then the quarrel's made up! Manville told me that he would be shot if he ever let a friend of his set foot in that confounded hole! I think it had something to do with the elections. By-the-by, Miss Forrester told me a queer thing about St. John—"

"Ah! there's Mrs. Sartoris! I haven't shaken hands with her yet."

In desperation he elbowed his way through the crowd till he gained Violet's side, and with difficulty brought a smile to his face instead of a scowl, with which to greet her.

"I have been looking forward to this for weeks," as he had the privilege of touching her hand for a minute. "Are you dancing to-night?"

"Yes, my aunt insists."

Almost before the words were out of her mouth Lord Belfeather whisked her off from under his very nose, and he was left with his request for a dance unuttered. Well, he could afford to wait, as he watched her floating round the room.

Soon she would hear that her husband was dead; soon he would be able to press his claim. How bright she looked, as she laughed and chatted with the young Marquis, squandering any amount of delicious smiles upon him, for one of which Ralph Armitage would have paid a thousand pounds!

Yes! he was mad enough for anything to-night; reckless as a schoolboy in the first fever of his passion. For one kind look from those lovely eyes, for one kind word from those matchless lips, he would have perilled much; and for the right to call that beautiful face his own he had endangered his soul.

"Give me a heartsease, for you have robbed me of mine!" said the Marquis, with his usual audacity.

"What would be the use? I don't want you to think of me when you are talking to an elegant Parisian. Just forget me whilst you are away, and I shall have the charm of novelty when you come back."

"You can afford to spare that charm to someone else," with a look of fervent admiration. "You remember our compact?"

"Yes, Lord Belfeather."

"Ah! if I succeed that stupid title will be dropped, and, remember, if you want me—I don't mean that," flushing slightly, "but if I can be of the smallest use a telegram to Rothschild, Paris, will always find me in course of time."

"Thanky, but I have an old friend close at hand."

"Landon's got a wife!" shortly.

"Yes, my dearest friend."

"If I were the dearest friend I should object."

"You would object to what, Lord Belfeather?" she asked, with quiet dignity.

"Now I've offended you!" he exclaimed in despair. "Oh! Mrs. Sartoris, do forgive me; it is the last time."

"You will offend me very much if you laugh at our friendship," she answered, gravely. "I have known Cyril Landon all my life, and there never was anyone kinder or truer, or better than he."

"A *rara avis*," with his chin in the air.

"Shall we take another turn?"

The Marquis did not enjoy it as much as the last. He felt chilled and offended. It was one thing to devote yourself to a beautiful woman, in a spirit of the purest chivalry, as her one particular champion, and quite another to do so when the field was already occupied with an interfering old friend.

For a little while he was unusually silent, and when he surrendered Violet to another partner he worked himself up into a passion as he leant against the wall.

To-morrow he was going to give up all his pleasant daily life, with its constant round of pleasure and excitement, and start on a quest which common-sense told him now as plainly as possible was nothing but a wild-geese chase.

He was doing all this, as he thought in utter unselfishness, and yet he was very wroth because Mrs. Sartoris would not seem disinclined to receive some measure of service from one who certainly had a prior claim.

He watched Cyril Landon dancing with her, and frowned because they seemed so perfectly happy together, forgetting that Violet had appeared to be just as bright when waltzing with himself.

It would be impossible to tell how many bright eyes watched the young Marquis whilst he was indulging in a most unusual burst of ill-temper.

He took no notice of any of them, drove mothers to despair by not paying the smallest attention to their daughters, astonished Lady Stapleton, who had looked upon him as certain to be the life and soul of the evening, and delighted Ralph Armitage, whose furious jealousy was laid to rest!

CHAPTER XXXV.

TAKING THE HEAD OF THE TABLE.

"MRS. SARTORIS, do you really mean to cut me, to-night?" Ralph Armitage asked, his voice harsh with pent-up feeling.

Violet remembered that he had saved her life, when she was flinging it away without a thought or care, and stopped as she was about to pass him on Cyril Landon's arm.

"Certainly not, Mr. Armitage. You seem to forget that this is not the first time we have met this evening."

"Are you going to dance with every other man but me?"

"My card is almost full, but I have the twentieth to spare if you would like to have it!"

It was only a square, but it was accepted joyfully, and they passed on.

"What is the good of promising to defend you from him if you give in like that?" asked Cyril, in earnest remonstrance. "The fellow doesn't deserve it."

"Recollect that if it hadn't been for him I shouldn't be here now," with a deprecatory smile.

"Webster was there, and I'm sure old Milton would have plunged in after you with pleasure, so Armitage needn't have interfered."

"You are as unreasonable as Lord Belfeather!"

"Why? What has that young fellow been up to?"

"Oh, nothing!" with a slight blush.

"Like his impudence!"

"What is?" innocently.

"I don't know," laughing, "but I'm sure he wants snubbing."

"Like most men," mischievously.

"Perhaps; but there are exceptions."

"I haven't found one."

"Violet, you ungrateful little minx! I'll deliver you up to Armitage's tender mercies the next time I come across him."

"Do, and somebody else will rescue me before five minutes are over!" nodding defiance.

He was delighted to see her so cheerful, and drew her out to the best of his ability, and when they parted a few minutes after the waltz was over he met Lady Stapleton, who said to him,—

"What a comfort it is to see the dear child so bright to-night!"

"Yes, isn't it? I could fancy she was a girl again, in the old house in Richmond-terrace. What glorious games we used to have of hide-and-seek!"

"Yes, and how happy she might always be if that husband of hers would not always be playing that horrid game still. Do you know, I think we shall hear of him soon. I dreamt of him so vividly last night."

"What did you dream? That he came back and they were both happy again ever afterwards?"

"No, I thought one of our friends, a man whom we are quite intimate with, was taken up for his murder. Horrible, wasn't it?"

"Not our *bête noir*, Armitage?" with a smile.

"I never could see his face, though I tried over and over again, there was always a cloud upon it. Now do go, and ask that poor Arabella Macartney to dance. I've done my best and introduced her to dozens of men, but all to no purpose, their cards are sure to be full if they see a plain face!"

"I'd dance with an Aunt Sally if you wished it," with a polite bow.

"You are a dear boy!" and the victim was at once led up to what he called "his sacrifice."

But the plain Miss Macartney turned out to be a remarkably pleasant girl; and when Cyril Landon, who was very particular, began the waltz with a sinking heart, he found that she danced exquisitely. Her face lighted up when she spoke, and a bright smile made him forget her plainness.

Before the dance was ended he asked permission to put his name down for another, and was quite loth to leave her till several couples were already standing up for the one quadrille of the evening, and he recollected that he had promised to dance with his own dear little wife.

He fetched her from the sofa, where she was sitting by General Forrester's side, and looked about everywhere for Violet and Ralph Armitage. When he found them at last, he saw that they had already secured a *vis-à-vis*, and as the places on either side were filled, he had to take up a position at some distance. Lord Belfeather was nowhere to be seen.

Cyril kept an uneasy look-out for some time, but was relieved to see that Violet still looked tolerably happy. Armitage's stern face had brightened wonderfully, but the middle of a quadrille is not the best place for private conversation, so he was obliged to talk the conventional twaddle of "society on tip-toe," which was probably a relief to his partner.

Mabel was much interested in a lady who wore some curious Indian-looking ornaments on her dress and in her hair, and begged her husband to find out her name, and all about her.

Cyril always attended to the slightest wish expressed by his wife; so, after depositing her in a comfortable seat, he went off to find Lady Stapleton.

Meanwhile, most of the couples who had joined in the quadrille, were crowding out of the room in quest of champagne or claret-cup to refresh their thirsty throats.

As the staircase was completely blocked,

Violet consented to be led into the conservatory, feeling sure that her trusty allies would not forget her. Ralph Armitage sat by her side on a low sofa, placed against a background of glowing azaleas, every vein in his body throbbing with intense emotion.

How lovely she looked, her white dress scarcely whiter than her neck, her eyes as deep and true a violet as the darkest of the pansies on her skirt!

"You should not wear those!" he said, in a low, but hurried tone, touching one of the heartseases with the tip of his finger. "You are the last woman to cry out *penes et mei* (think of me). Don't we think of you enough already? Don't you drive us mad fast enough with—with your beauty?"

"No," with a nervous laugh, and a quick glance towards the door, which was draped with the trailing branches of a new Mexican creeper, through which glimpses of the new half empty ball-room, were to be seen. "Not half fast enough. I'm an old married woman, and all my powers of fascination are going from me."

"I wish to Heaven they were, Violet!" "Not that name, please," drawing up her neck, whilst the diamonds gleamed on the whiteness of her skin. "You always seem to forget that I am Mrs. Sartoris."

A shiver ran through him from head to foot, and his cheeks grew lividly pale. He tried to speak, but only muttered something quite incoherent.

"You are ill; you feel faint; I will get someone to fetch you a glass of water!" she exclaimed, anxiously.

He laid his hand on her dress to prevent her from rising.

"No, I'm all right. It is the uncertainty—the suspense—which is killing me."

"What suspense?" she asked, in wonder, fixing her eyes on his agitated face.

"Suspense! I said nothing about suspense. You treat me like a dog; but that will be put a stop to some day."

"You've nothing to complain of."

"Haven't I, though?" in a harsh voice.

"Do you ever look me in the face, and give me a smile such as you give to Landon or Belfeather?"

"They amuse me, and you don't."

"No, I'm not fond of playing the part of clown or pantaloons: but you might have a spark of interest in me. One day you shall—I swear you shall!" striking his own knee when the right man slipped into the empty chair, and two heads drew closer together. Violet's eyes roamed from Mabel, quietly discussing some apple jelly, to Cyril, waiting politely, though with a graver face than usual, on the Duchess of Kensington.

If there were any mystery Mabel evidently knew nothing about it, but Cyril might; for he was not amusing the Duchess, as he generally did. For a long while she had to attend to the people about her, answering their jokes with a smile, or with some sparkling repartee; but her mind was uneasy all the time.

"What is the matter?" said Lord Belfeather, in a low tone, after watching her face with keen interest.

"I wonder so what has become of my aunt?"

"Didn't Lady Stapleton go down with the first set?"

"But the Duchess was with the first, and she is here still."

"Yes; and probably will be here with the third—if there is a third—for my mother's appetite is as large as her heart," and her son cast a laughing glance in the Duchess's direction, which made her shake her head at him.

The supper went on cheerfully enough. There was a display of magnificent plate, belonging to the deceased peer, and exquisite glass from the choicest manufactories, and the loveliest of flowers from countless hot-houses; whilst the viands were of the daintiest that Gutter could supply. The wines were far above the average of what is generally met with at balls, so the men were content, for good wine is the special hobby of the

To tell the truth she had been very much annoyed with him; but his evident penitence disarmed her at once.

"Thanks—you are too good! May I say good-bye to you here? I shan't get such a chance again. I shall think of you wherever I go—I needn't tell you that," looking down into her face with the sadness of parting clouding the brightness of his own.

She stooped, and breaking off one of the coveted heartseases, put it into his hand.

"There! That is to remind you to write to me if you have any news. I shall always be thirsting for it."

"I will keep you posted up in everything," taking out his pocket-book to find a safe receptacle for his treasured flower.

Then he held out both his hands, and she put hers into them, feeling as if she could scarcely restrain herself from throwing her arms round his neck, for wasn't he going to bring Jack back to her—if he could?

The fair head bent very low, the fair mouth closed softly, first on one small hand, and then the other.

There was nothing on earth he would not have done at the moment—aye, and willingly too—for the wife that was no wife—the wife whom that other man had cast off.

"Heaven bless you!" she said, with a catch in her breath, whilst tears of hope and gratitude gathered in her eyes, and her lips trembled.

Without a word he drew her hand once more through his arm, and brushing aside the creeper, his face unusually set and grave, he led her back into the drawing-room.

They were met by Cyril Landon, who said hurriedly,—

"Lady Stapleton says, will you send in the rest of the guests, and take the top of the table?"

"But auntie ought to sit there! What is she thinking of?" said Violet, in surprise.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

WHAT WAS THE MYSTERY?

MRS. SARTORIS did the honours with such grace that few people asked where Lady Stapleton was. Champagne corks popped, plates clattered, tongues wagged merrily. Every jest was greeted with merry laughter, and bright eyes flashed brighter than ever when the right man slipped into the empty chair, and two heads drew closer together. Violet's eyes roamed from Mabel, quietly discussing some apple jelly, to Cyril, waiting politely, though with a graver face than usual, on the Duchess of Kensington.

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male sex; and the women were satisfied with everything, perhaps because they had everything to satisfy them.

"Mrs. Sartoris, you are eating absolutely nothing!"

"Indeed I am. It is so foolish of me, but I feel as if something were happening. Did you see Mr. Landon hurry out of the room?"

"No; but perhaps it was to order some more champagne!"

"No, Winter would see to that."

"Then to see that the musician's feed. He has got such a charitable heart, and people so often forget them!"

"Ah! it might be that. Cyril never forgets anybody but himself!"

"That is why you are always remembering him," with a grimace.

Violet smiled, then beckoned the butler to her with her fan.

"There's nothing the matter, is there?" she asked, in a low voice.

Winter's mouth shut up tight, then opened, as if he were afraid that some remark would escape him against his will.

"My lady is engaged ma'am."

"Engaged? At this time of night?" her colour coming and going. "Is anyone with her?"

"Yes ma'am—a Frenchman!"

"A Frenchman? Oh! then it's news from abroad," and she rose hurriedly.

"Sit down," said Ralph Armitage, harshly. She did not know that he was near, and started convulsively at the sound of his voice.

"Lady Stapleton does not want you. Don't you see that you are already making an uncomfortable impression on all these people?"

"Will you go and ask Mr. Landon to speak to me?"

"Yes, if you promise to go back into the drawing-room, and not excite yourself about nothing."

"I will do my best."

"Tell them to strike up at once. You must set them going, or everything will be at a standstill."

"I hope that fellow orders you about enough!" said Lord Belfeather, angrily, when they were standing at the top of the ball-room.

"Something has come over him to-night. Look at him dancing with Mabel Landon! I am sure he is terrifying her."

"I believe the man's drunk!"

"No, no, not that; mad perhaps. How radiant Lady Jane looks!"

"Yes, somebody must have left her a legacy. Evidently Armitage has been too much for Mrs. Landon, for she is deposited on a sofa panting."

"Yes, and now he is worrying his sister."

"Let us go and see what it is about," she added, presently, "and then I can scold him for not doing as I told him."

They crossed the room with difficulty, and when they reached the spot where Lady Jane had been standing, found that she and her brother were slowly making their way towards the door, talking very earnestly.

Ralph had astonished his sister by begging her to come away. She objected strongly, urging that it was still early, and that some of her best dances were yet to come off.

"Why should we go?"

"You will be sorry for it if you don't. You are not such a baby as to care about staying for the last!" contemptuously.

She looked up into his face, and her heart almost stopped beating.

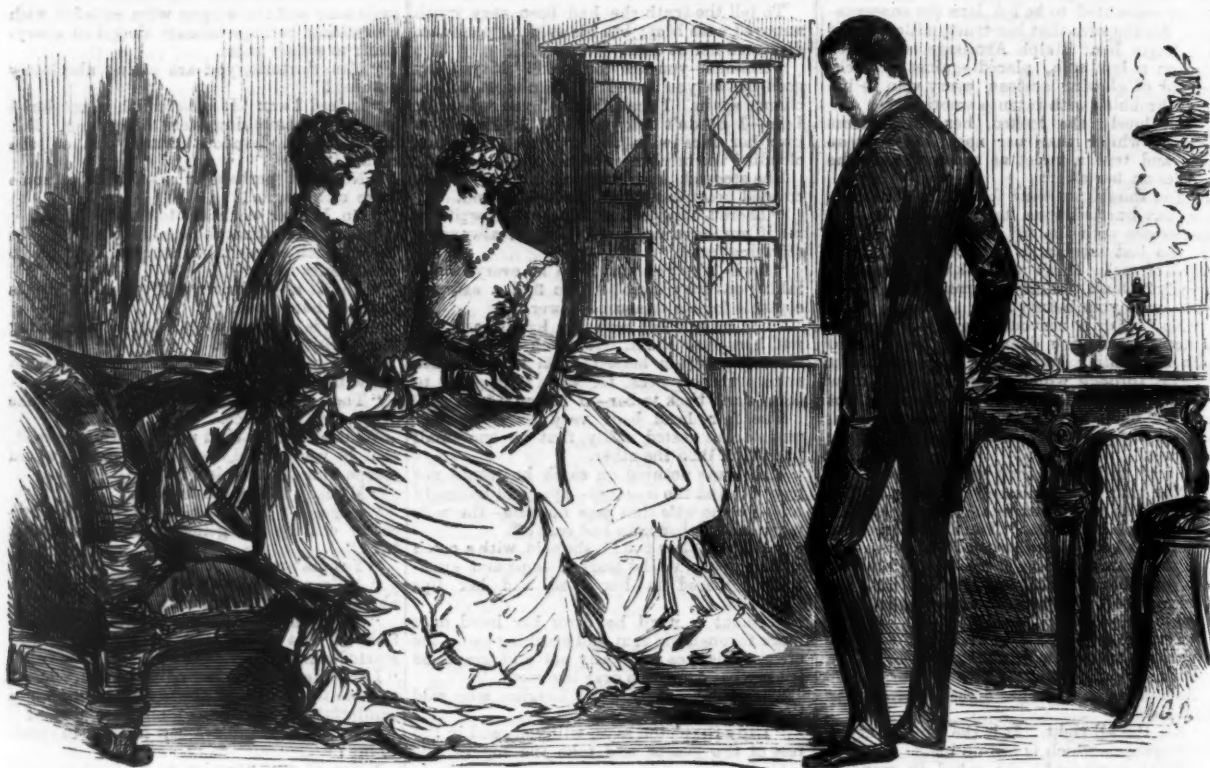
"What is it? You are keeping something back!"

"I? I know nothing—I swear I don't."

"So shocking! Such a dreadful blow!" said a voice behind her.

She turned eagerly, but her brother laid his hand upon his wrist, and absolutely dragged her away. And she was obliged to offer no resistance for fear of making a scene.

The band was playing vigorously, but the strains of the *Myosotis* floated idly through



["DON'T BEAT ABOUT THE BUSH!" VIOLET SAID, HOARSELY. "IS JACK DEAD?"]

the emptying rooms, for with one consent the crowds were hurrying away. A whisper had passed from lip to lip, and there was a general movement towards Violet, who was completely hemmed in by the departing guests.

Why were they going? Why did they all give her a pitying glance—yet say nothing beyond an ordinary phrase of conventional politeness?

She had to keep up a smile, whilst her heart was throbbing with wild anxiety, and the melody of the waltz seemed to be echoing through her brain like music in a nightmare. Lord Belfeather had gone before the general rush, having several things to see to before his early start on the morrow. Cyril was nowhere to be seen, and even Ralph Armitage had disappeared without waiting to say good-bye. She tried to comfort herself with the thought that if the bad news had concerned her she would have been the first object of interest, and her friends would certainly not have chosen that particular moment for deserting her. Mabel she spied fast asleep on a sofa, having sunk down quite exhausted after that furious gallop with Mr. Armitage. Her head was slightly bent forward, as if she were smelling her bouquet, and she was evidently slumbering as peacefully as a child.

Violet, though she loved her friend tenderly, was fretted by the sight of that placid sleep, when she herself was disturbed by wild anxiety. Yet she felt she would not rouse her for the world.

The music ceased, the musicians looked round in surprise at the emptiness, and began to pack up their instruments with all haste, being anxious to secure as much of a night's rest as they could in the midst of their busy lives.

They trooped out of the room, carrying their shrouded instruments with them, leaving to Violet's excited fancy, like mutes at a funeral.

Then there was profound silence, the brilliant lights in the gilded sconces seeming to

mock the emptiness. Violet stood like a statue under the Venetian chandelier waiting. Presently there was the sound of a footstep on the staircase, and Cyril Landon came into the room.

She did not move an inch, only kept her eyes fixed upon his face in breathless expectation.

"Let me take you downstairs," he said quietly, but his voice sounded odd and strange. "Lady Stapleton wants to speak to you in the boudoir."

She took his arm without a word, for a deadly fear was upon her, and she did not dare to ask a question. As they neared the door she felt as if she must find some excuse for delay, and turned her head towards the sofa, where Mabel was sleeping in happy unconsciousness of all that was passing.

"Your wife," she said, and it seemed as if her voice had changed as much as Cyril's, for her throat felt dry as a chip. Cyril looked towards his young wife, and his face softened.

"I will come back," he said, and stepped out on the landing.

There was a knot of footmen standing in the hall, but Winter made a sign to them, and they all withdrew to a distance whilst he opened the door of the boudoir in solemn silence. Violet turned her face to Cyril, and her lips parted, but no words came from them.

A kindly pressure of the small hand that rested on his arm was his only answer to the mute question.

One glance assured her there was no one in the room but Lady Stapleton. If a Frenchman had been there he had already departed.

There was a small tray on the table with a decanter and two wine-glasses, one of which had been used. The fire burnt low in the ornamental grate, as if no one had had time or thought to replenish it, and Lady Stapleton shivered as she rose slowly from the velvet-covered sofa, and, holding out her arms, drew

Violet close to her motherly breast, saying pitifully,—

"Oh, my poor child!"

Violet would not let her head be drawn down, but putting her hand under her aunt's chin, compelled her to turn her face towards hers.

"Tell me the worst, I can bear it," she said, in a hard, cold voice utterly unlike her own.

"You have not seen your husband for a long while," said Lady Stapleton, pulling her down beside her on the sofa, and stroking her soft brown hair as if she were a child, whilst her own lips trembled, and tears rained from her eyes; "and you've grown quite accustomed to being without him?"

No answer, but the stony gaze of a pair of eyes which seemed wondrous large.

Poor Lady Stapleton! It was a hard task, and she did not know how to get through it. Cyril made her a sign to be quick, for he saw that Violet's apparent calm was not true composure, but the result of nerves strung to the highest pitch, and the longer she was kept in a state of dread expectation the less her strength would be able to bear the final blow.

"If he never came back again," began Lady Stapleton, but Violet stopped her, pressing both her hands in a clasp of iron,—

"Don't beat about the bush," she said, hoarsely. "Is Jack dead?"

Then Cyril took up a travelling-cap which was lying on the sofa, and held it out to her.

"This was found on the shore of a French lake!"

"He drowned himself!" with a gasp, and a choking spasm in the throat. "Oh, Heaven! did he hate me as much as that?" and with a shudder passing from head to foot she hid her face on her aunt's shoulder, and there was an awful silence broken only by a woman's sobs.

(To be continued.)



["ARE THEY GONE, DOCTOR?" GLADYS CRIED, AS SHE CAME FROM THE HOUSEKEEPER'S ROOM.]

NOVELETTE.]

LIGHT IN DARKNESS.

—30—

CHAPTER I.

It was five years and more, the villagers said, that the shutters had been closed in Dunreigh Park, the late lord having died at that time, since which the lawyers had been employed in endeavouring to discover the whereabouts of the son, who, until his death could be proved, remained heir to the princely estate, coveted though it be by those who would, were Guy Dunreigh really dead, have become possessed of the title and broad lands appertaining thereto.

But strong, fine men of seven-and-twenty, in the full enjoyment of health, and all that is required to make life enjoyable, do not usually go off, even to oblige relatives anxious to step into the dead man's shoes; and thus it was with Guy, who, at the time of his father's decease, was travelling in the East—not until he returned to the hotel he occupied when in Paris, four years after, finding, from a letter which awaited him there, that the sad event had occurred.

There had been a scene during their last meeting, and the old lord had been heard to say, when the door closed on his son, he never wished to see his face again. That day week he died; his only prayer his sole cry for the boy he had driven from him.

But no one knew where he had gone, although there was a rumour it was not alone; and various surmises were raised as to the cause of the quarrel between father and son, when it was known that Gladys Muntrone, governess to the Rector's children, had disappeared at the same time.

And now, five years after, every prepara-

tion was being made to welcome home the young lord. For weeks the workpeople and charwomen had been engaged in cleaning within the mansion itself, under the superintendence of Mrs. Long, the housekeeper; and the bright spring sun, resting on the fresh polished windows, made them to glitter like diamonds beneath its rays, which slanted off to the bright soft grass, and the trees budding with their new, young life.

"And so he's expected to-morrow, Mr. Sheeney," an old woman was saying to the carpenter, who was erecting a triumphal arch, on which an immense welcome, in red and white, was to be placed as it stood near the entrance to the Park itself.

"Yes," was the reply, "and if the sun only shines as he's a doin' now, missus, it'll be a gay day for Dunreigh, I can tell ye," and Mr. Sheeney proceeded to knock until the sound of his hammer started each songster in the Dunreigh Woods.

"They're a going to take out the hosses," he continued, "and twelve young fellows are to draw the carriage which is to bring him from the station, while the school children are to be placed each side of the way, one, the prettiest of the lot, to present him with an address, drawn up by the parish folks, bidding him welcome home."

"An' so he ain't married, arter all?" the other said.

"Not that folks know on," was the reply; "but o' course you remember, mother, what was said when he left the Park all of a sudden now five year ago?"

"I should think I do," the old woman answered! "Why I remember when he was a tiny fellow, not that height," and she measured the distance from the ground, "over twenty year back, when I was under-housemaid up at the house, and he with his long golden ringlets hanging down his back!"

Just then a young lady was seen approaching, and Mrs. Gallon turned, curtsying as

the former advanced, whilst Sheeney left off, and touched his hat.

"Good-day, miss," he said, "you see I've laid 'em on pretty thick," and he pointed to where he had been nailing the green shrubs on the arch.

"So I see," she replied, "and I thought you might be ready for the banner," and she displayed a strip of red, on which "Welcome home" had been worked in white.

"Well, miss, the Rector was a 'thinkin' wi' me, it would be better to leave a 'doin' that till the mornin', not that I sees much chance o' rain," and Sheeney looked up at the bright, blue sky, from which the sun apparently laughed down at him at the idea.

"Well, perhaps you are right," the girl replied; and then she refolded the crimson strip, when, after praising the work of the carpenter, and passing a few words with the old woman, she moved away, leaving the same in his care.

For some moments the two watched her retreating form, and then the latter turned to where Sheeney, who had completed his task, was gathering his tools together, preparatory to going home.

"She's the sweetest young lady I ever cast eyes on!" he said, to his companion, whilst throwing his bag over his shoulder; "an' if the young lord ain't wed, she's the one who'd make a bonny Lady Dunreigh; an' I do believe you were a 'thinkin' the same, mother," he added, as he turned with a laugh to Mrs. Gallon, whose eyes still followed the graceful figure of the clergyman's daughter, until the last ripple of her yellow hair had passed out of sight.

"Lor', Mr. Sheeney, how you do talk!" she answered, "just as if Lord Dunreigh would marry anyone who warn't a born 'my lady!' No, I was a 'thinkin' how time flew; Miss Inez there, but a wee thing in short frocks, when Mr. Guy used to go to the Rectory afore he went away, and now she's a grown-up young

lady, an," here the old woman paused, "I was a wonderin' what he would think of her?"

"Think of her!" queried the other. "What could he think other than she is beautiful as a picture, and good as she is beautiful! But here we are, mother," he added, as they had reached the gate leading to his cottage; "so good-bye, an' I only hope we may have a fine day on the morrow!"

And a fine day they had, when the chimes of Dunreigh (a present from the late lord) burst forth joyously on the spring air, which was soon filled with the hurrahs of the peasantry, as they assembled to witness the arrival of the heir.

The horses, as Sheeney said, had been detached from the carriage in which he was seated, whilst a dozen young men in smock frocks drew it lustily along, until they reached the triumphal arch, with the gates beyond which led to the Park itself.

Here the Rector with his pretty daughter met him on his alighting, and after addressing a few words to the people, Guy with them proceeded on foot to the house beyond.

He was a tall, splendid fellow, as all said; but the bright young face which they had conjured up in their minds when he left Dunreigh but five years since was gone. His features had become harsher, and his brown eyes, that in the old days had danced in fun, were almost sad in their expression, whilst his skin, formerly fair as a woman's, had become swarthy from the effects of an Eastern sun.

"You have had a glorious reception, my lord!" Mr. Massingham said, whilst walking beside him on the soft grass, with Inez hanging nervously on his arm, afraid to lift her pretty eyes to her old playmate, who had so changed from the Guy she had expected to meet.

The latter turned as his former tutor, the Rector, thus addressed him.

"Please don't you call me that," he said. "If all my old friends are going to address me in the same fashion I shall just tell Thomas to pack up my traps, and be off again. In fact, I don't think I should ever have come back at all had they not made me—the lawyers, I mean," and he kicked a stone impatiently aside. "Now my father is gone the place has no further fascination for me. However, I suppose it was the right thing to do," he added. "But here we are. Come in, Rector, and be the first to partake of my hospitality."

They had reached the principal entrance now, and as they ascended the broad white steps the servants of the household could be seen ranged each side of the spacious hall to give welcome to their future master.

Mrs. Long had been years in the service, having been retained after the late lord's death, with one or two of the others, as caretaker, until it was decided who should succeed to the title.

She had known Guy when, as a tiny tyrant, he held sway over all in the house, shedding more tears for him when in his wild temper he turned his back on his home than the father, who from that day never named him, until at the last, the suffering he had endured, the five years which intervened till his death, showed itself, then too late, in the piteous accents in which he called for the son he had discarded.

"Welcome to Dunreigh, my lord!" she said, advancing, the tears glistening in her eyes. "This is, indeed, a happy day!"

She held out her hand, which was cordially grasped by Guy, no less moved than the old lady herself, as the sight of her kind, faithful face awakened memories in the past, when, after a few pleasant words to the others, he passed on to where everything had been prepared for his reception, followed by Mr. Massingham and Inez.

"My lord" with everyone! he said, almost irritably, more to himself than his companion, and then, as the Rector entered within the noble apartment, he pressed the hand of the latter, adding cheerfully, "With you, at

least, let me be Guy still?" leading her forward to where, from the window, they could see preparations being made for the roasting of an ox whole, which was to be divided amongst the poor, whilst a grand dinner under the superintendence of the steward was to be given to the tenantry on the estate.

But as Mr. Sheeney confidently said to others, everyone was sadly disappointed in the day's proceedings—his lordship so altered that the melancholy look on his face was enough to give anyone the blues; and for his part he couldn't understand a man coming in for an estate like Dunreigh and fifteen thousand a year a taker of it with a heart no lighter than if it were a halter to hang him with.

Even Mr. Massingham wondered at the change which had come over his former pupil, and could scarcely recognise in the sad, worn face of the man any trait of the light-hearted youth whom he had learned to love as his own son.

CHAPTER II.

Five weeks had elapsed since Guy came into his inheritance, and rumours were afloat that his right to the same was about to be contested, such being confirmed by the frequent visits of Mr. Struts, the lawyer to the estate, who was the only guest received at the Park since the accession of the former to the title.

But these reports were looked upon by most of the residents in the neighbourhood, and by Mr. Massingham in particular, as mere idle talk, for there could be no disputing the present lord to be the same Guy he had known when as a child of four years he had undertaken his tuition at the express wish of Lady Dunreigh during her last illness.

There was a certain connection between the families by marriage, which, although the relationship was so remote as never to be alluded to by the Rector, gave to her ladyship a plea for doing many little acts of kindness which otherwise might have savoured of patronage, and thus, when requiring a tutor for her son, Mr. Massingham was selected by her choice.

And now the latter was not so much disappointed in his former pupil as he was surprised at the change which had come over him; and at times there would recur to his mind the story which was rife when he so suddenly left his father's roof, that he did so in company with Gladys Muntrone, a story he had always pooh, poohed, from the fact that the lady in question was in years old enough to be his mother; but whatever the truth might be, it was certain both disappeared at the same time, and from then he heard no more of his late governess.

During the weeks that followed his return, Guy Dunreigh took but little interest in the estate to which he had succeeded, the steward continuing to follow his own inclination without as Mrs. Long did within; and therefore it was with no little surprise that, one morning, when summoned to the library, that lady became aware that her services would be required no longer.

Guy was seated by the table, on which an open letter lay before him, and he turned the same nervously over and over whilst speaking.

For some seconds the woman stood petrified, then advancing nearer to his lordship, the tears starting to her eyes.

"Have I failed in my duty, my lord," she asked, "that after thirty years I should be dismissed?"

But Guy still toyed with the open letter, not caring to meet the look he knew he should find on her faithful face; then, as she pressed him for an answer,—

"Oh, no, Mrs. Long," he said; "but," and she noted the hot blood rush to his temples, "an old friend of my late father in greatly reduced circumstances, has begged of me to give her the post, and I cannot very well refuse."

"And I am to go after thirty years to make room for a stranger?" she answered.

A hope that he would recall his words still made her linger, but no reply coming she turned, despair depicted on her countenance; and a sorrow she was unable to control bursting forth in bitter sobs, as with tottering steps she moved towards the door, one moment looking back on the man whom she had loved as her own son, and then she closed the same after her.

At the sound of her retreating footsteps Guy raised his head.

"Poor old woman!" he said, "it is hard lines," when a sudden impulse to recall his words seized him; and, hastily rising, he advanced to the door through which she had passed, with the intention of telling her to remain, when the letter, which in the moment he had forgotten, fluttered to the ground.

The former, which he had but partly opened, he again as quickly closed; and then he returned to the chair he had so recently vacated.

Mrs. Long was unaware that he had followed her, whilst the rattle of her silk dress, and the words—"After thirty years" was all that fell on his ears, as his eyes again rested on the letter he had recovered.

"DEAR GUY," he read; "there is no alternative; I must be on the spot. I foresee this trouble, and am prepared; but you must give me some berth in your establishment, and rely on me for the remainder. I have been thinking the matter over. I will take the house-keeper's place. You understand; have it vacant for me a month from to-day. When I give it up Mrs. Long can return. I shall be provided for."

"GLADYS MUNTRONE."

"A month from to-day," Guy repeated, as he reclosed the epistle. "How I wish I had never been persuaded to enter into such a mad scheme!" and then refolding the same, he placed it in his breast-pocket, and determined to saunter towards the Rectory.

A bright June sun was shining o'er hill and glade, the air laden with the perfume of roses, some growing on the many trees dotted here and there amid the garden walks, whilst others trailed in luxurious profusion over arbours and trellis work; but Guy's favourite path was one which led from the Park to the Rectory, where each side flowers of varied tints were tastefully arranged in the neatly-raked borders, whilst above was a complete avenue of interlaced branches, from which a chorus of tiny songsters re-echoed in the summer air.

As a boy how often he had traversed the same in pursuance of his studies, until, as he grew older, a something far more attractive than lessons had led his footsteps in the same direction; and now it was Inez, the girl with whom he had played in those happy school-days, who was the attraction still.

"Oh! if I could only tell her the truth!" he thought, as he walked along, a butterfly gaily dancing on in front, until Guy found himself envying the insect the life it so much enjoyed, till thinking of the one rough wind which would cast it to the ground, and the heedless touch which would deprive it of its beauty for ever. But then there would be no one but itself to suffer, he considered; whilst he, in his sorrow, must bring grief on her he so fondly loved.

"Yes; after all, old fellow, I envy you," he said, to the butterfly, and then he opened the gate leading to the Rectory.

Inez was seated beneath a shady tree, the book she had been reading lying listlessly on her lap, whilst her eyes, with a far-away look in their blue depths, were gazing on space.

"A penny for your thoughts, Inez!" he said, she starting as he advanced stealthily behind, and touched her on the shoulder.

"I don't think they are worth it," she answered; "but I am so glad you are come

Guy, I felt so lonely. Papa has gone to see an old woman who is dying."

"An old parishioner?" he asked.

"No, dear!" was the reply. "It seems she has not long come to live at Dunreigh, but she has been spreading it in the neighbourhood, that she knows who is the real lord, and when the title to the estate comes to be disputed she will give evidence."

"Then she means to say I am not Lord Dunreigh?" Guy said, smiling. "That's pleasant to begin with; and, of course, that being the case, Inez, you will have nothing more to do with me?"

He had seated himself on the grass at her feet, whilst she lovingly passed her hand over his hair, not till then raising his eyes from the soft green.

"If you were a beggar to-morrow I should love you just the same!" she answered; "but it is not true, Guy, what they say, is it?" she asked.

"When you tell me what they do say," he replied, "I shall be better able to decide."

The colour rushed to the girl's face; she could not bring herself to tell him even then the gossip which had become circulated within the last three weeks.

"Oh! it is nothing, Guy, dearest!" she answered, "only wicked stories made up by wicked people, and that horrid uncle of yours, who wants to get Dunreigh for his own son."

"But suppose, Inez, that what they say is true—that I am an usurper, a—"

He had risen to his feet now, looking down on the girl with her eyes lifted to his own, and the sunlight falling on her hair, turning it to burnished gold; and then he gazed around to where the broad lands of Dunreigh stretched far and wide, with the river at its foot sparkling and glimmering in the distance—those two that beloved better than all, Inez and the home of his birth, knowing not the moment he might lose them both.

"Don't talk like that, Guy," she said. "I know it is not true," and she was about to impart the story current in the neighbourhood, when Mr. Massingham was seen approaching.

"Here is papa!" she cried; "now we shall hear all about it."

But they heard very little, for the Rector was more than usually reserved, speaking nothing of the woman to whom he had been summoned farther than that she was dead, and he was very thankful that she had sent for him, before it was too late.

"But I have just seen Mrs. Long," he added. "Poor old lady, she seems awfully cut up. What is it all about, Guy? I never was so surprised in my life as when she told me she was dismissed your service."

"I regret the parting as much as she does herself, but there was no other course open to me," the other answered, and then they moved towards the house. Mr. Massingham saying, as he followed his lordship within,—

"Of course you know best, but I hope you have not made a mistake. The advice I give, Guy, is that of a friend. Let her remain."

CHAPTER III.

On his return home, Lord Dunreigh at once wrote a reply to the letter he had received the previous day, in which he named his intention to act on the Rector's suggestion, and retain the services of his father's old and trusted servant; that from one or two hints let fall by the former, he began to feel he had nothing to fear; but the reply which followed settled his determination, and a few days after Gladys Muntrone was installed as housekeeper, Mrs. Long not even being permitted to remain the time specified.

"I will see Mr. Strutt," the former said, when that gentleman called at the Park, not long after, and much to the astonishment of the other servants, she was closeted with him and Guy in the library fully two hours on his arrival.

What transpired at the conference was not known, but there was a triumphant look on the face of the woman, whilst the lawyer secured the red tape around some papers he held with an air of satisfaction, Guy alone appearing sad and depressed, as they emerged from the library.

"Now what do you think of your cousin's chance to oust you from Dunreigh?" she asked, when later on Mr. Strutt, having left, she returned to the room where his lordship still remained.

He was seated by the open window, looking out on the quiet scene before him; all had grown so still in the closing summer day, and he was gazing vacantly where he had but a few moments since watched the sun as he sank beneath the purple clouds thinking of Inez, and how she would despise him did she know his guilty secret, and how much happier he would be with the weight of the same removed from his mind.

Then a resolve to break the fetters which bound him made him start to his feet, when the hand of Gladys fell on his shoulder.

"Did you hear what I said?" she asked.

He turned, and at that moment almost hated the woman before him.

"Yes," he said, "and I wish from my heart that I had never returned; but it is not too late even now," he added. "I can leave Dunreigh."

"Leave Dunreigh!" she exclaimed. "Are you mad or a fool? And what do you think people will say I should like to know? That you are an impostor, and you will be followed, brought back, and punished for taking possession of another man's property, and using another man's title."

"But if I can prove that I acted in ignorance?"

"Ignorance, bah! Who would believe you?" she added. "You must be out of your senses."

When perceiving that her words seemed to have no effect on him, she brought forward a more powerful agent to her scheme, as in gentler tones she continued, her dark eyes looking searchingly into his,—

"What of Inez—do you think she would believe you innocent?" she asked.

"I do," he answered.

"You do!" was the reply. "When I go with my story to her father, giving him proof of my words, as I did you, when I told you who I was five years before Lord Dunreigh's death, what do you think then?"

The bitter sarcasm in her tone was not lost on her listener, this woman who had a cruel wrong to avenge, whilst he, but a tool in her hands, had to suffer more, far more, than she.

But the freedom in her tone changed as the door opened, and a servant entered with lighted lamps, when moving from where she had been standing near to Guy,—

"Then you will not require me further, my lord?" she said, and casting a significant look behind her, left the room.

Relieved from her presence the former reviewed in his mind all that had passed from the day he returned to the Park as Lord Dunreigh; and although it was only lately, owing to some papers discovered in the writing of his dead father, that the title to the estate was disputed, still he had already wearied of the litigation, and only when under the influence of Gladys Muntrone was it that his resolution to withdraw from the contest wavered.

Each stone, each blade of grass, was dear to him, wrought as they were with memories of his happy boyhood; but he would gladly have resigned all for one moment's peace of mind and Inez's love, the fear of losing the latter being the one great power to urge him to still give up his claim.

A few days later Mr. Massingham called, having something of importance to communicate; and on being conducted to the library, where his lordship was, he was not a little surprised to come face to face with the new housekeeper as she emerged from the same.

Astonishment for the moment deprived him of speech, and the latter brushed by, thinking she was unrecognized, but although years had brought a change to the once handsome face, still it was impossible but that he should again know Gladys Muntrone.

Guy arose from the seat he occupied when the Rector was announced, who could not fail to see the nervousness in his manner as he held out his hand to him.

"Excuse me, Rector," he said, seeing the impression the same had made on his visitor, "but I am not very well, and I was just giving some orders as to what I could fancy in the culinary line when you came in."

Mr. Massingham scarcely noticed his remark, as he took a seat opposite to that which the younger man had resumed, his thoughts leading him to wonder what could the tie possibly be which existed between the woman he had just passed and Lord Dunreigh—that she who was supposed to have shared his flight, five years before, should now be installed as housekeeper at the Park!

"Guy," he said at last, seeing that his silence was not unobserved, "I have known you from a boy—a baby I may say, for you were but four years old when your mother died, and for her sake even now I study your interests as my own. When you left Dunreigh Park, nearly six years since, every one believed it was in company with Gladys Muntrone, then governess to my little Inez. To-day I find her here in your house, in your room. Tell me what position she holds in this establishment? Doubtless you think it is no business of mine," he continued, as he saw a look of defiance pass over his companion's features. "Maybe it is not, but until you choose to inform me what hold that woman has on you I must retract the promise I made to give you my darling, my Inez."

At the mention of Inez, a spasm of pain for a moment was visible in the twitching of the mouth, as Guy raised his eyes almost beseechingly to the Rector's face; then, after a few seconds,—

"She is my housekeeper," he answered.

"Your housekeeper!" the other exclaimed, "Mrs. Long, an old and faithful servant, dismissed that this woman might take her place! Can this be true, Guy? And was it with her that you fled from Dunreigh, that you spent five years away from home and country, only returning when you acceded to the title, and could let her reign here as mistress?"

Mr. Massingham! And Guy advanced to where the Rector, having arisen, was in the act of resuming his hat, previous to bidding him good-bye. All anger had left him now, as gently placing his hand on the elder man's shoulder, he asked him to hear what he had to say.

"Gladys Muntrone is here," he went on, "and off and on I have been with her ever since I left Dunreigh, some years back, but that there is any sin between us before Heaven I swear it is false."

"And you refuse to tell me then what the tie is which binds you to each other?"

For a moment Lord Dunreigh stood irresolute, wishing—longing—to unburden his mind to his old friend, when the door opened gently, and Gladys appeared.

She cast one glance from her dark eyes—a look he could not mistake.

"I beg your pardon, my lord," she said, "but I thought you were disengaged, and would be able to sip a little beef-tee." The next moment she was gone, and Mr. Massingham again turned to the latter,—

"Then you refuse to tell me further?" he said.

"I cannot," was the reply, when with a cold "good bye, my lord," the Rector went out—out into the bright sunshine and soft summer air, where birds sang blithely, and sweet-scented flowers cast their perfume over the Dunreigh grounds, leaving Guy, who owned them all, alone in his misery.

CHAPTER IV.

For days after he saw nothing of his old tutor, and although he had several times called at the Rectory, neither Mr. Massingham nor his daughter were ever at home, and it was with a heavy heart that he would return to beg of Gladys to release him from the oath he had taken to keep her secret and his.

But she was inexorable, and so the weary days passed on, the monotony of which was only broken by Guy being called to London respecting the impending suit; and so nervous and irritable had he become that even Mr. Strutt—notwithstanding that the first counsel in the land had been engaged on his client's side—began to fear for the result, and had even thrown out hints that the evidence on the other hand was so overwhelming that he felt half inclined to withdraw from the case.

But notwithstanding all he had at stake, the impatience evinced by the lawyer, and the fury of Gladys, which he had to encounter on these occasions, nothing could remove the apathy which had gradually come over him.

If he could only have seen Inez, he knew—he felt—that in spite of his oath, at the risk of all, he would have revealed everything, and thrown himself on her love for the rest.

It was on one of these occasions, when more than usually despondent, on his return from the metropolis, that he sat down, intending to write a full confession to Mr. Massingham. The day had been hot and sultry, and the cool breeze which played in at the window of the library seemed doubly refreshing after the intense heat of the crowded streets.

The housekeeper was unaware of his return, and he had given orders to the servant who opened the door to him that he was not to be disturbed, that he had dined in town, and further than wine and biscuits, which were to be taken to him to the former, he required nothing.

For some moments he sat looking out on the wide expanse of velvet-green, with the thin, silvery streak of blue, where the water flowed in the distance, whilst the shades of evening came gradually creeping over all, the songs of the birds hushed and still, and yet not a line written on the paper he had placed before him.

"I don't know what to think of it," he said, at last, his own voice seeming to him strange, whilst he raised his hand and passed it across his eyes; "but I cannot see a letter, and my head is going round like a windmill," when after making another attempt to write with the same effect, he threw aside the pen, letting his throbbing temples rest on the former, whilst they beat—beat alike to burst.

How long he remained thus he could not tell. All had become so quiet, even the bleating sheep gone to their rest, and nothing to be heard but the gentle sighing of the wind and the whispering of the leaves in the branches overhead, whilst a passing breeze, like the touch of an angel's wing, played with his dark hair.

Gradually his head drooped—drooped until his arms, falling too, made a pillow for it on the table by which he was seated; and then he dreamt of Inez, whose image was ever present with him. He was on a bed of sickness, around which forms were moving to and fro, and he could hear a man's voice giving directions to them as to what they were to do, whilst a girl kneeling by his side held his hand in hers, and he could feel her tears fall on his hot skin. He could touch her soft silky hair, winding it round his fingers, but all was dark as night; he knew his eyes were open, but they were rayless, and when he would have gazed on the face he so fondly loved, there was but a sob, a sigh to tell him she was there, and the one faint gleam of light in his darkness was gone.

"Why, Guy, you will catch your death of old, sleeping here by the open window!"

It was Gladys who spoke; she had been told the butler, who had gone in to see if his

lordship required lights, that he was afraid the latter must be ill; he seemed so strange, and was moaning, with his head laid on the table.

At the sound of her voice he awoke with a start, and a wild, unnatural light in his eyes.

"What a time I must have been asleep!" he said; "I felt very tired when I came home, and could no longer withstand the drowsiness which has been over me all day. Tell Davis I shall retire early."

"But you have had nothing to eat," the woman answered; "and until I was told you were asleep here I had no idea you had returned, or I should have come before to hear what is going on—what they are doing now."

"I can only tell you that they have incontestible proofs to bring forward," was the reply. "It was folly to contest the point from the commencement; but, for Heaven's sake, don't worry me about it now," and he pressed his hands to his temples, vainly endeavouring to still their mad beating.

"What is the matter? Are you not well?" she asked.

But there was no reply; the weary eyes had again closed. Lord Dunreigh appeared unconscious to all around him, whilst his housekeeper watched, a half-terrified look on her face, as she listened to his heavy breathing.

"Is he going to be ill?" she asked herself aloud, and the sound of her voice in the stillness which had momentarily reigned within the apartment aroused the sleeper.

He arose with an effort, throwing off the lethargy which had overcome him, when, saying he would go to bed, he bid her ring for his valet, and shortly after left the room.

The next day (ill-news rides apace) all Dunreigh knew that his lordship was dangerously ill; that, in addition to the family doctor, advice had been sent for from London, and the gravest fears were prevalent as to his chances of recovery.

And Inez was seated beneath the shade of the same tree where they both, but a few weeks since, had sat together—she with the sun on her bright hair, turning it to gold, and the love-light in her blue eyes, and he looking up to her face, to read there the answer to all his hopes. And when the sad tidings reached her now, in that spot, a wave of reproach to her father who had made her to doubt his faith, flowed through her mind.

"Oh! Guy, my love, my love!" It was all her lips could utter, as, with her heart breaking, all the love of her life went out to him, tossing and moaning on his bed of pain.

And the July afternoon passed on, until the warm sun sank to rest in his bed of gold, leaving but the grey and purple to tell of his past glory; and still she sobbed on the soft, green grass, sobbed out the grief which was making her wish that she could die with him.

And then a gentle hand lifted her from the turf, which she had made wet with her tears, and a kindly voice bid her lean on him for support. As he led her within he had no need to ask her sorrow, for had he not seen her day by day grieving her young life away for the man he thought unworthy of her love?

"Is she still there with him, father?" she asked.

And Mr. Massingham shrank from telling her the truth, the while he could not bring his lips to speak a lie.

Gladys Muntrone was still at Dunreigh Park.

CHAPTER V.

It was typhoid fever in its worst form, they said, that had attacked the young lord, and for weeks, the weary days and restless nights, made the watchers by his bedside to tremble for the life which hung in the balance.

"You had better see him, Rector," Dr. Evans, the family physician said, when at last a ray of reason had come to the fevered brain of his patient, and, in reply to his urgent

wish, that gentleman had gone in quest of Mr. Massingham.

The latter was seated in his study when the doctor was announced, looking careworn and sad, for he had loved Guy—the boy he had taught from a child—as though he were his own son; and then the double sorrow of seeing Inez fading away before his eyes made him feel with greater grief the circumstances which had arisen to hinder him from being as he would otherwise have been, the first to visit him in his sickness.

"In fact," the former continued, noticing the hesitation on the part of the other, "I do not shrink from saying that I believe you hold his life in your hands. Doubtless there is something on his mind with which you are connected, your name was the first on his lips when the delirium left him, and that there has been some terrible misunderstanding I am convinced from a few words he let fall."

"A misunderstanding Lord Dunreigh might easily have set right," was the rejoinder, "had he told me that which, standing in the position he did to me as my future son-in-law, I had a right to know."

"What place does Gladys Muntrone hold in his household?"

"That of housekeeper," the Doctor replied.

"What on earth are you driving at, Rector? Now, we have been old friends for years, and you surely don't wish to make me believe that there is any other tie than that of employer and employed between Mrs. Muntrone and Lord Dunreigh?"

"You remember the scandal some five years ago, doctor, when they both left Dunreigh together?" the Rector answered; "a fact Guy has never denied, even admitting they have been with each other ever since; and then no sooner does he accede to the title than he dismisses an old and faithful servant to place her in the vacant position! I loved Guy," he continued, seeing the puzzled expression on the face of his companion, "loved him as my own son; but what would you—what am I to think?"

"It is a question I am unable to answer. That there is some mystery in connection with her presence I do not deny; but that it is what you insinuate I do not for a moment entertain. However, Rector, let it be what it may," and the doctor advanced to where Mr. Massingham was seated, nervously turning the pages of an open book which lay at his elbow, "you are a clergyman. Surely you will not refuse to see him? Remember, Lord Dunreigh is not yet out of danger; the very fact of your refusal may cause his death!"

The argument was a strong one, and had the desired effect, when but a short time elapsed before he entered the room in which the sick man lay, nor could he suppress a start on witnessing the change which the cruel fever had brought to his features.

His face was pale and sunken, whilst his eyes were dull and soulless; and although he turned his head at the sound of his voice his hand wandered over the coverlet until the Rector took it in his own.

"I am indeed grieved to see you like this, Guy," he said, and then he sat down by the bed, the latter having expressed a wish they should be left alone.

"Are they all gone?" he asked, after a few moments, and the door had closed lastly on the trained nurse, when, on Mr. Massingham answering in the affirmative,—

"Then draw up the blind, Rector, will you?" he said; "it will not be so dark then, will it?"

"It is not dark," was the reply, "and the blinds are all raised," and then, for the first time, the painful truth became known to the former—Guy Dunreigh was blind!

"Ah! I forgot!" he said, whilst in his weakness the tears started to his sightless eyes. "I shall never see you again, Rector."

"Oh! don't say so, Guy!" the other replied. "You cannot tell, it may be but a temporary affliction—you may in time recover your sight."

"There is no hope," he answered, a sad

smile passing over his wasted countenance, "but the loss of that is more easy to bear than that which I have suffered since our last meeting. I don't mean my illness," he continued, thinking his companion might suppose he alluded to the same, "but that after all the years you have known me, Rector—the boy you taught, the lad I was foolish enough to think you loved, that you should doubt me caused me more pain than all that through which I have passed in the long, weary weeks which have followed."

"If I have wronged you, Guy, may Heaven forgive me!" Mr. Massingham replied; "but what could I think when I saw Gladys Muntrone beneath your roof, and you refused to tell me the true position she held, but that there were other relations between you than servant and master I could not doubt."

"And Inez?" he asked.

"Has never ceased to believe in you," was the rejoinder, "for she has loved you, believing in you still, until she has become but the shadow of her former self; and how gladly would I bring sunshine to her heart if you would but confide in me this story which is thus making a wreck of two lives."

"True, too true," he answered, drawing a heavy sigh; and then for some moments he remained quiet, battling in his own mind 'twixt the love which would tempt him to disclose all, and the sense of honour which made him keep another's secret, however much the doing so involved himself in that other's crime, when burying his face in his hands.

"I cannot," he moaned, "would to Heaven that I could!"

"Assure me," Mr. Massingham said, touched by his grief, "assure me that there is nothing—which did I know—would prevent me from still sanctioning your union with my child! Give me your word that you are true and honourable, as I would feign believe you, my lord, and I will bring Inez to you!"

"My lord," he repeated bitterly, and then the bright smile which had played over his features at the thought of Inez's presence so near him vanished, leaving nought but blank despair, robbing even his sightless eyes of the faint ray of light which had come to them in that one moment of his great happiness.

A few moments later he was calling Inez by name, in fancy passing his hand over her golden hair, telling her how he loved her, and then bemoaning that he could never see her face again. The delirium which the doctor hoped had left him had returned.

"Stoop low," he said to Mr. Massingham, "and I will tell you who she is," but then the door opened from without. His quick ear detected the rustle of a silk dress, and the words died on his lips, when Gladys entered the room.

"Excuse me," she said, turning to the Rector, "but I am afraid my lord will not be able to bear further excitement, and he has been talking already over an hour."

"You are right," the former replied. "I fear he is worse, and I feel sure there is something on his mind which hinders his recovery," when, with a look at the woman she could not misunderstand, he moved away.

Dr. Evans met him as he emerged from the sick room.

"Well?" he asked.

"Gladys is at the bottom of it all," was the reply, "I think you had better go to him—he is worse."

CHAPTER VI.

THE day following bad news was brought from the Park. His lordship had had a relapse, and he was dying.

Inez prayed her father to let her see him, with the tears coursing each other down her pretty face, which had grown so thin since she had last seen her lover. And Mr. Massingham had consented, for what could he do now but grant this his last request; and so, in the dim twilight, with the trees sighing overhead, as

though they, too, sighed for the young life passing away, they wended their way along the path pressed so often by his footsteps in the days gone by.

Long before reaching the room where Guy was they could hear his laborious breathing; and as the door was opened, that they might enter, "Inez!" was the first word which fell on their ears.

"I am here, darling!" the girl answered, heedless of all who surrounded the bed where her lover lay, blindly groping, until his hand, guiding him to the voice which he had never forgotten, he laid it restfully on her sunny hair, a look of peacefulness gradually creeping over his features, when with the other he drew her down, down, until her soft cheek touched his, and her warm breath mingled with his own.

"At last, my darling," he whispered; "my love, my Inez, at last, happiness at last. Oh! if Heaven would for one moment restore my sight, that I might look on your beloved face!" and then a spasm of pain seemed to pass over his own, but a slight movement on her part caused him to press her nearer, nearer to himself, as though he feared she should be taken from him.

Not a sound broke the stillness of that holy scene, Mr. Massingham standing silently by, whilst one by one, the others moved away, feeling that they had no part in their happiness, until still with her golden head resting on his bosom, where he had placed it, a gentle sleep came over him; gradually the wasted hand dropped on to the coverlet, and his breath came and went calmly as an infant's.

Noiselessly, and so as not to disturb the sleeper, the Rector quietly raised his daughter from her cramped position, and then those two watched, whilst hour passed hour, and still Guy slept. Only once did his lips move, when stooping, so as to catch his words, Mr. Massingham heard him indistinctly speak of Gladys, and then himself.

"Oh! you will let me tell him now, won't you?" but although he strained his ear to catch the last word, it was too low, but his breathing became more regular, until even Inez restrained her tears, and her face became bright with the hope which this change had raised in her breast.

"He will do now," Dr. Evans said when he looked in a short time after. "Miss Massingham has been the best doctor after all," when leaving Guy still sleeping in the care of the nurse, he told the Rector to take the former home now, or he would be having her ill, and he two patients instead of one on his hands.

"And mayn't I give him one kiss, doctor?" Inez asked, looking back to the bed where her lover lay.

"I would not risk it," was the reply. "This sleep may save him—a few hours, and the crisis will be past; and when he wakes, which I hope will not be for some time yet, it will be to life, please Heaven!"

He led them from the room, walking on tip-toe, fearing that even the sound of their feet on the velvet pile might awaken him. And then at the door they parted.

"I will let you know the first thing in the morning," he said, shaking the Rector's hand; "sooner if a change for the worst, which I do not anticipate, should take place," when the heavy hall-door closed behind them, and they went out into the summer night, the moon shining brightly on hill and dale, speaking to them of a brighter world beyond the grave.

"Are they gone, doctor?"

It was Gladys, who emerging from the housekeeper's room, thus accosted him. She was dressed in a loose peignoir, over which her thick black hair hung as a veil, whilst her face, tinged on either side with a burning red, causing her dark eyes to look brighter still, made her appear in her weird beauty like some tragic queen.

"Come here," she said, as he answered in the affirmative, and she led him into her own room. "Tell me, is Lord Dunreigh better? Will he live?"

For the moment Dr. Evans could not reply, the questions came so hurriedly, and her manner was so altered from the ladylike anxious housekeeper he had been accustomed to see.

"While there's life there's hope," he at last answered, noting how impatient she was becoming. "I trust he will."

"What a fool I was to believe otherwise!" she said, "but sit down, doctor; I want to speak to you before I go."

"Before you go! Surely you do not intend leaving his lordship in his present state?" he exclaimed.

She had seated herself by the table, opposite to where she had placed a chair for her companion, her hand supporting her head, from which she had thrown her long hair backwards, whilst her feet were beating an impatient tattoo on the hearthrug.

"Yes. I am leaving Dunreigh to-morrow," she answered. "Mrs. Long will be back then. I told one of the housemaids to go for her, with a message that Lord Dunreigh was dying. You say he will live. I thought different, and when he prayed me to release him from his oath to keep my secret I consented. He can tell Mr. Massingham, you, everyone if he likes, who I am now, though I can do him a good turn yet; but I want money, and it is you who can get it for me, otherwise I keep my tongue silent, and he loses Dunreigh."

She spoke so hurriedly, so excitedly, like one who had staked his all on a single card, and lost; and when Dr. Evans would have interrupted her she motioned to him to be silent until she had said what she wanted to say.

It was a long story, a story of misplaced affection and broken faith, a woman's wrong and a woman's revenge; and the first streaks of dawn were showing in the eastern sky, making the lamp, which burnt still in the housekeeper's room, look dim and unnatural in the morning light, when once again Dr. Evans emerged from the same.

"I will promise you the sum you ask, in the name of Lord Dunreigh," he said, and then he crossed the hall ascending the stairs leading to his lordship's room. "Is it possible!" he mentally exclaimed, when after giving once glance at the sick man, still sleeping calmly as an infant, he retired to rest himself.

CHAPTER VII.

THE crisis had passed, Guy was saved. Such were the first words with which Dr. Evans greeted the Rector on the following day.

"Prostration," he added, "is all we have to fear now, and that, with good nursing, I hope to conquer."

And so the days passed, merging into weeks, each one bringing renewed strength to his exhausted frame.

He had never asked for Gladys, although he wondered how it was that Mrs. Long had taken up her former position in the Dunreigh household; but a sad expression would steal over his countenance, his sightless eyes becoming dim with unshed grief when after the lapse of five weeks they took him again into the open air.

He could hear the songs of the birds overhead, the ripple of the water which gently flowed on, as he had so often watched it do in other days, but the beauty he had gazed on then he could see no more; he could scent the flowers, but could not feast his eyes on their loveliness, and at times like these he would almost wish his life had been taken from him.

And then it was that a touch from Inez's soft hand, the sound of her beloved voice, would yet teach him how much he had to live for still; until, day by day, leaning on her for support, they would wander through the Dunreigh grounds, at times resting beneath the shade of some full-leaved tree, when he would draw her near—so near, till her head was laid

on his shoulder, and he could toy with the silken tresses of her golden hair, day by day growing stronger, and feeling happier in his blindness than in the weary weeks before his illness.

All that had transpired then seemed to have passed from his memory, until he had become sufficiently recovered to receive the visits of Mr. Strutt, who never felt it imperative on his part, to tell him that his cousin Herbert would no longer hesitate in asserting his claim to Dunreigh Park, and then it all came back to his recollections, dispelling with overwhelming force those dreams of happiness in which he had so lately revelled; and for the first time since his recovery he appeared to notice the absence of Gladys.

Mr. Massingham happened to be present on one of these occasions when the lawyer was announced, and rose with the intention of saying good-bye when the latter entered; but Guy put aside his offered hand.

"Don't go, Rector," he said. "I have nothing to say to Mr. Strutt that you should not hear," and then he motioned to the latter to be seated.

"I am here, my lord," he said, "to ask you if you can give me any idea where Mrs. Muntrone can be found? I understand from Dr. Evans that she left your roof during the time of your illness, leaving no clue behind her, and without her our case is hopeless."

Guy turned his sightless eyes in the direction of the lawyer.

"Mrs. Muntrone gone!" he said, "and I not to know it!"

Then he passed his hand over his forehead, as if to recall his thoughts.

"Gone!" he repeated. "Ah! I remember she came to me that night when the doctors had said I could not live. Yes, it all comes back to me now, and I prayed her to let me clear my name with regard to herself, to release me from the vow which I had taken never to reveal in what relationship she stood towards me, and she, thinking that I should rise no more from the bed on which I lay, consented."

"And so she left me—did she?" he continued, after a pause. "Not knowing, little caring, whether I lived or died, and she was my mother!"

He had rested his head on his hand as the cruel truth presented itself before him, for some moments remaining wrapt in his own painful thoughts; then rousing himself with a sudden resolve, born of despair, he addressed the lawyer.

"I resign Dunreigh," he said, "to-morrow to the rightful heir, my father's nephew. Write his solicitor at once, Mr. Strutt, to that effect. I will no longer retain that which is not mine."

"Guy, you must be labouring under some terrible mistake! What can you mean? Gladys Muntrone was never your mother!"

It was Mr. Massingham speaking to him now; but he only smiled sadly in reply, whilst the lawyer confirmed the statement he had made.

"Yes, Rector, Strutt is right," he answered, "and you must forgive me for withholding that which until now I did not feel myself justified to reveal. But listen to my story, and then condemn me if you will. I know that I have had ample time since I was released from my oath to have told you all; but I was so happy in the present that I had almost forgotten the past, whilst I was too great a coward to dare to think of the future."

"My love for Dunreigh, my childhood's home, each stone of which was dear to me, I could have overcome; but when I thought that did you know who I really was I should lose Inez—dearer to me than life itself—I shrank from speaking the words which would make my life a desert. I had so much to bear"—and he lifted his hand like one groping in the dark—"that I felt I could not by a word throw my love from me, and so I went on living in a fool's paradise, never knowing

the hour when my happiness would be wrecked, as it is now."

"And you thought so little of me, Guy, as to suppose because you, in ignorance of your birth, and assuming a title which you had been reared to consider as your own, that I should withdraw my consent to your marriage with Inez, when discovering your mistake, you honourably resigned the same?"

"No, no, Rector! Had I only acted as you say, how different my feelings would have been? but it was not that. Five years before my father's—Lord Dunreigh's—death I knew I had no legal right to bear his name."

"It was then for the first time that I met Gladys Muntrone, when she was governess to my child-love, Inez. As you know, I was but twenty-two—scarcely that; and one day she told me how her heart yearned towards me, that she could keep her secret no longer."

"For the moment I stood aghast, unable to understand her meaning—she a mature woman in the full bloom of her beauty, and I but a boy in years compared to her. She read my thoughts in my face, and laughed a bright, silvery laugh at the idea I had formed."

"No, no, Guy!" she said, "I do love you, but not in the way you think; but meet me to-night down by the river, in the walk under the larches, and I will tell you a secret concerning yourself of which you little dream. I am your mother!"

"Surprise, curiosity, and anxiety to hear her story made me keep the appointment, and before the hour named I was there awaiting her advent."

"The time passed, and she did not come, when, arriving at the conclusion that she had been only having a joke with me, I was about to turn away, when I saw her approaching in an opposite direction."

"I am sorry to keep you waiting, Guy," she said, "but I could not get away before. We are not likely to be disturbed here, and my story is a long one, so we had better lose no further time; but before I commence you must promise to obey me to the letter, and consent to leave Dunreigh with me, should your father prove inexorable."

"I hesitated at first, but she declared if I did not consent she would herself go to Lord Dunreigh, and I might imagine the rest. The promise she exacted I gave, when she told me that it was twenty odd years ago that she first met the latter, when he was at his shooting-box in the north, her father being bailiff on the estate. She was barely sixteen, a tall, beautiful girl, considered the belle of the neighbourhood, with many a lover ready to fall at her feet."

"It was solely by accident that his lordship saw her, for her father was ever fearful that the gentry should cast their eyes on his home-treasure, her mother having died when she was too young to remember her, and she all that was left to him to love and cherish."

"But in an evil moment she and Lord Dunreigh met. At first he was but charmed with her great beauty, as she was with his polished ways, so different to the boorish adulation bestowed on her by her rural lovers."

"From being pleased at first by the attention shown her by the young nobleman, she began to look forward to his visits with impatience, feeling dull and listless did he not, as had become his custom, make his daily visit at her father's home. And then he spoke to her of love; and she, child as she was, gave him her faith, her pure, fresh affection, until her heart, her whole life, was so bound in his that when he left Glenvar she went with him, fully trusting in his word that she was to share his home, his title, finding when it was too late how cruelly she had been betrayed."

"She dared not then return to the old father she had deceived, and who was wearing his life away in sorrow for his lost lamb, but hid herself away from all, in the nest the former had provided for her, shrinking even from him whom she had so wildly loved, as the sense of her shame crept over her. To

her entreaties that he would keep his promise he always turned a deaf ear—ever kind, but ever holding out some obstacle to their union, till one day the truth was revealed to her, as in a *Times* paper which had been carelessly left behind by his lordship she read of the birth of an heir to Dunreigh. That night her own son was born."

"From that day she determined to cast from her heart the love for the man who had so betrayed her. For weeks she lay sick unto death, and when at last she came back to the life she had prayed to leave she resolved to quit the roof which had sheltered her, paid for with his money, and go out from his world as completely as though the grave had closed over her for ever."

"To enable her to carry out her purpose she placed her child in the care of a woman, a Mrs. Atwell—"

"Atwell, did you say?" Mr. Massingham said, interrupting him.

"Yes," was the reply; "do you know her?"

"No, no!" the former answered. "Go on, Guy; I am anxious to hear your story."

"Not long after having done so," he continued, "she obtained a situation, the sense of the great wrong she had suffered haunting her like a shadow, ever rankling in her mind and urging her on to devise some means of revenge, for fondly as she had loved Lord Dunreigh at one time she hated him then."

"It was so, when an advertisement appeared in the columns of the *Times* for a person with unexceptionable references to take care of a child, whom a lady, through delicate health, was anxious to place out to nurse. The address given was Dunreigh Park, and at my mother's suggestion Mrs. Atwell answered the same, when, all proving satisfactory, the infant heir was placed in her care, Lady Dunreigh taking an affectionate farewell of her babe before proceeding with her husband on her travels to recruit her strength."

"During the time she was away Mrs. Muntrone frequently visited the former, to whom she told her full story, unfolding a scheme she had carefully laid, that her own son should inherit Dunreigh. The sum she offered the woman, should the same succeed, was a large one, and after a little demur she agreed to help her to carry out her plan."

"Shortly after Lord Dunreigh's son, who was but a puny infant, died, and on the return of her ladyship after a lapse of four years I was installed in his stead as heir to the Dunreigh estates."

"My father doted on me, as also did the latter, who unto the day of her death ever believed me to be her own son, whilst I grew up from my infancy, having no suspicion as to my true parentage until that day when, as governess to your daughter, Mr. Massingham, I first saw my own mother."

"The latter had in some way learnt of the ill-feeling which existed between Lord Dunreigh and his brother, whose son, in the event of his dying childless, would succeed to the estate, the former having been heard to say he would rather see the Park a desert and the house in ruins than that Herbert should own either."

"Yes, they were bitter enemies," the Rector interposed, "owing, I believe, to Lady Dunreigh favouring the suit of the elder, whilst she refused the hand of the younger brother."

"I was never told anything about that," Guy went on; "only in accordance with my promise to do as she (my mother) desired me I went to Lord Dunreigh, told him all I had discovered, upbraiding him for his heartlessness, proving to him that but for me he was childless, whilst begging him to look on me as the son he had lost."

"At first his fury knew no bounds. He cursed me and the woman who bore me; and then when he would have volented his cruel words I refused to accept his proffered hand, and went from the room, from Dunreigh itself, without turning to witness the grief I had left behind."

"My mother met me by appointment the next day; but [no persuasions on her part would make me go back further than to collect a few things necessary to my departure.

"My father was in the library when I entered, a glad light coming into his face, which changed to dull despair when I told him nothing would induce me to remain under his roof.

"Guy, my son, my son!" he cried, burying his face in his hands, whilst I could see the tears trickle through his fingers; but I was gone, leaving merely the address of an hotel in Paris where he could write to me.

"It was the last time we met, when, arriving at our destination I found a letter awaiting me, enclosing a large sum of money for my present necessities, and the notification that a certain amount would be placed to my credit at the bank stated.

"Notwithstanding my fixed determination to act otherwise, by threats and entreaties I was in the end prevailed on by my mother to conceal the facts with which I had become acquainted, knowing full well Lord Dunreigh, loving me as he did, would never cease to regard me as his legal heir, and that whether I succeeded to the title or not lay in my own hands; and so, yielding to her arguments, I agreed.

"A few days after I started for the East, in the excitement of change hoping to forget the revelation of my birth, which had come on me as a dream.

"Then came the news of his lordship's death, I remaining in ignorance of the same; my mother not even knowing whether I was dead or alive.

"There is my story, Rector," he added, with a sigh; "what followed you know."

He had thrown himself back in his chair now, worn and exhausted, Mr. Strutt looking more disgusted at what he considered his consummate folly than surprised at the confession he had made.

"Am I to understand, then, that your intention is to restore Dunreigh to your uncle's son?" he asked.

"Decidedly," was the reply. "I will no longer retain a stick that is not mine by right. It is useless to argue the point further. I am so tired, I must beg you to excuse me now."

CHAPTER VIII.

"I will see you though before you go, Strutt," he said, rising, and laying his hand on the lawyer's shoulder; "you must dine with me to-day. It may be the last time, and I owe you at least gratitude for the part you have acted, as you thought, in my interest."

He would have moved to the door, carefully feeling his way, but Mr. Massingham stayed his progress.

"One word, Guy," he said.

He turned at the familiar voice, as he would have done years ago when a boy.

"You remember the day," the Rector began, after having led him gently to a seat, when I found you and Inez beneath the beech-tree on my lawn, and I told you—at least Inez did—that I had been sent for by a woman who was dying, who had something particular to tell me before she went?"

The blind man turned his head, guided by the sound, and Mr. Massingham noticed a look of expectancy pass over his features.

"Yes," he answered, passing his hand over his forehead, "I have some recollection of the circumstance," and then he waited, that the other might proceed.

"Well, that woman was Mrs. Atwell. She had taken up her residence at Dunreigh, when she had heard of your return, to watch the course of events, as she first said, for your welfare; but afterwards confessed that she might, by doing so, give evidence on which side paid her best. She was sure of the one, and if the others did not choose to make it worth her while to say otherwise, she would

still go on deceiving her and them at the same time, by declaring on oath that you were the boy she reared as the son of Lord and Lady Dunreigh, whilst on the other hand she was equally ready to swear you were the child of the former and the girl your father had betrayed."

Guy looked, his rayless eyes expressing astonishment, whilst the Rector continued,—

"But it appeared, when told by the doctor, that she would never rise from the bed on which she lay, a feeling of remorse came over her, and it was then that she sent for me.

"You have known him from a boy, Rector," she said, "and loved him as your own. I should have told the truth long ago, for I was getting tired of it all, but she kept telling me my only chance was to keep her secret, and that the day her son entered into undisputed possession of Dunreigh I should be a rich woman. Her son, she said. When making me swear I would not reveal the story, she told me, unless circumstances compelled me to do so, she laughed a laugh which grated on my ears, it sounded such a mockery with death so near, when resuming her former tone, a sudden thought of the same having apparently crossed her mind, 'her son,' she repeated, 'who had been laid in his little grave years since.'"

"Then Guy is indeed Lord Dunreigh?" I asked. "What proof have you to give me that you are even now not telling a lie?"

"The proof!" she repeated, "and I on the threshold of the grave! What would it avail me now to tell a falsehood? But don't take my word, I can't expect you to, but ask old Mrs. Gallon who was at the Park when he was born, and she will tell you of the bunch of currants plain as life to be seen high up on his arm, where even in his baby dress it was hidden by the little sleeve."

She had raised herself in the bed in her excitement, and then fell back; and for a moment I thought her dead, but when I would have moved,—

"Can't you pray for me?" she said, and I could see her lips moving as if in prayer, when, kneeling by the side of the bed, I asked for forgiveness from above for this woman who was thus passing away.

"A few moments, and I arose. She was gone."

"Truth is, indeed, stranger than fiction, Mr. Massingham," the lawyer said, his countenance having perceptibly brightened on listening to the Rector's story. "Lord Dunreigh, I congratulate you," he added, and would have taken Guy's hand, but the latter pushed it almost impatiently from him, when he remembered that this man was little better than Mrs. Atwell, having shown himself equally as anxious to secure Dunreigh for him, believing him to be Guy Muntrone, as he was ready to grasp his hand when proved to be lord of the same.

But Mr. Strutt allowed this movement on his part to pass by unobserved. It would not do to quarrel with him in his present position, whilst what had transpired in the past he knew to be safe, as far as he was concerned, in his lordship's keeping.

"My happiness is too great," the latter said, "leave me to think it all out. I should be but bad company just now," when grasping the Rector's hand, he begged him to accompany Mr. Strutt to the dining-room, where refreshment had been provided for them; and as the door closed behind them, he buried his face on his arms, as he rested them on the table before him; while all the events so lately enacted chased each other through his brain, and in his overflowing joy he was unable to suppress the tears which started to his eyes, in the intensity of his happiness.

"Inez, my love!" he cried, "there is nothing to divide us now," and then a spasm of pain passed over his face.

In this moment of unutterable bliss he raised his head, and remembered he was blind!

CHAPTER IX.

It was some time after, however, notwithstanding that incontestible proof had been forthcoming as to the identity of Guy, Mrs. Gallon's testimony with that of the nurse who was in attendance on Lady Dunreigh at the time of her baby's birth being brought forward in evidence of the birthmark, which still was to be seen on his lordship's arm; Gladys Muntrone who had returned to Paris, not being the one least surprised when she discovered that all along the boy she was led to believe her own was in truth the rightful heir.

But many months have passed since then; and Guy, happier than he has felt for years, is again almost a constant visitor at the Rectory.

Mrs. Long, reinstated in her former position, has been engaged for weeks in superintending the arrangement of new carpets, curtains, and fresh furniture, according to his lordship's directions.

"You must see for both, you know," the latter would say, cheerily, as she would lead him through the different rooms, now and then passing his hand over something which he knew instinctively should be there; and then he would glide along to another place, seemingly unconscious that he could no longer see.

But one day a tiny light appeared to come from his darkened eyes. He was with Inez, speaking to her as he loved to do of the happy days which were in store, when together they would pass through the valley of life, that one thought that he could not see her beauty casting a shadow over his happiness, when he suddenly grasped her hand, on which glittered a valuable ring, his present.

"Something bright, with sparks of fire," he said, placing it so that the rays of the sun played on the gem, and then he brought it nearer, for the moment unable to believe the hope which that one gleam had arisen in his breast. "Oh! if Heaven should restore my sight, Inez!" he said.

"You must not despair, Guy," she answered. "You know what Dr. North, the great ophthalmic physician said, that in time it would come back to you, in all probability; but you must be patient, dearest."

"And have I not been patient, Inez?" he asked, vainly endeavouring to catch again the one ray which had momentarily brought a faint light to his darkness, to leave it again as it had been.

They had been strolling along by the side of the tiny river, Guy's favourite walk, until they reached the spot where a short year before Inez had watched Sheeney erect the arch, beneath which Lord Dunreigh was to pass to his future home. How much had transpired since then! and now preparations were proceeding for the wedding which was to take place a week hence—a week which passed as quickly as the year had done before it; and it was a bright, warm day in June when the bells of Dunreigh rang out joyously on the summer air, roses being strewn by the hands of tiny children along the path leading from the church-gate to the porch of the holy edifice, whilst Inez, her fair cheeks glowing with her new-born happiness, stepped over the flowery way, leaning on the arm of her husband, whom she guided to the carriage awaiting them.

Guy had placed his bride within, amid the blessings and congratulations of the assembled throng, himself about to follow, when a woman, better dressed than the others, pushed her way through the crowd, advancing until she placed her hand upon his shoulder.

"May Heaven bless you, Guy Lord Dunreigh," she said, and he knew the voice, although he could not see her form.

It was Gladys Muntrone.

And then they drove off, the bells again clashing with a peal of delight, amid the hurrahs of those gathered together, who quickly dispersed when the last carriage moved away, leaving her alone, standing there still

until the last sound of departing wheels had died on her ears. And then she, too, passed on.

CONCLUSION.

For several months Lord and Lady Dunreigh were absent from the Park, the hopes which Dr. North still gave of the former recovering his sight inducing them to remain in London that he might be under his treatment.

"We shall be coming home soon, papa, dear!" Inez wrote after a while. "Dear Guy is so much better; he can discern objects, and is frantic with delight, declaring he could see the colour of my hair to-day for the first time, but he has to be very careful, and even when quite able to see, will have to wear a shade over his eyes for some time yet."

And so it was that in the yellow autumn they once again returned to Dunreigh, Guy scarcely able to control his emotion when he beheld again the home of his childhood, now so doubly dear, that not a leaf, not a flower that he did not gaze on with a new-born gladness; whilst Inez would share in her heart the happiness he felt when he praised the Heaven which had given him back light in his darkness.

[THE END.]

The highest use of a friend is his friendship, and in some respects a friendly book is the very best of friends. Speech is silver, silence is golden. A book is a bi-metallic friend; it will give you either silver speech or golden silence, as you prefer.

A RUG FOR THE NURSERY.—Form grey Canton flannel into a six-foot square. Cut paper patterns (in outline) of all the animals you can—as the cat, dog, elephant, rat, cow, horse, frog, rabbit, squirrel. Then cut them from coloured flannel, carefully choosing assorted colours, as yellow, blue, white, red and brown. Use button hole stitch to fasten these impossible-looking animals on the Canton flannel. A few stitches with black or white cotton will form features, and help to define the body and supply the shading. This is so nice for baby to look on that it will repay you for the trouble of making it.

BEFORE PAPER.—Wood was one of the earliest substances employed on which to inscribe names and record events. Stone, brass, lead and copper were also used at an early period; after which the leaves of trees. These were superseded by the outer bark of the tree, but this being too coarse the inner bark came soon after to be used, that of the lime being preferred. This bark was called by the Romans *liber*, the Latin word for book, and these bark books, that they might be more conveniently carried about, were rolled up, and called *volumen*, hence our word volume. The skins of sheep, goats and asses were the next materials used, and so nicely were they prepared that long narratives were inscribed on them with the greatest accuracy. Some of these were fifteen feet long, containing fifty and sixty skins, fastened together by thongs of the same material. The intestines of certain reptiles were also used, for it is a well authenticated fact the poems of Homer were written on intestines of serpents in letters of gold. This roll was one hundred and twenty feet long, and was deposited in the great library of Constantinople, where it was destroyed by fire in the sixth century. The next material was parchment—skins smoothed and polished by pumice stone—to which succeeded vellum, a finer description of parchment, made from the skins of very young animals. On this vellum gold and silver letters were stamped with hot metal types. Some of these productions are very beautiful, requiring much time and labour to prepare and complete them.

J A E L.

—3—

HAL CHALLONER took his cigar out of his mouth, and looked at the painting which I had just placed on the easel in my room.

"Ha! a new picture," he said.

"Yes, I picked it up to-day," I answered.

"What do you think of it, Hal?"

"Can't exactly see into it," said Challoner, staring at it with a puzzled face. "What does that half-coronet on her forehead mean—and the veil?—Jael! Who or what was she?"

"That question does not speak well for your Biblical knowledge," said I, laughing. "Don't you remember the story of Jael? Surely, you have heard of her? There isn't, to my mind, a more vivid bit of painting in the Bible. If I were an artist, in place of a mere idler and amateur, I'd have made that woman the subject of my 'chef-d'œuvre.' This is an attempt to portray her. It is a sort of Oriental head-dress, you see."

Now, all this while, Challoner had been studying the picture with a queer half-recognition, which was not lost upon me. Indeed, I had counted somewhat upon that feeling of consciousness when I bought it.

I was, as I had remarked slightly to Challoner, an amateur in art.

There had been a time when I hoped to be something more; but fate had ordained that I should fall heir to wealth sufficient to gratify even my luxurious art-loving taste, without trouble on my part; and here I was, living in a sumptuous suite of apartments, well-fitted out with pictures and articles of vertu, and with only a nominal business to occupy part of my time, and still occasionally dabbling in oil.

That very day I had been painting, and had only removed my picture from the easel and put the other there when I heard Challoner's step outside.

Challoner and I had been friends of long standing. Perhaps it was the contrast between us that gave the half-romantic flavour to our friendship.

I was quiet, at times dreamy, living among my books and pictures, and averse to the society of women. He was full of life and brightness, popular among men, petted by women. There were some who called him shallow and a flirt; and, at times, and dearly as I loved him, I was constrained to acknowledge that he did play a part often which was not altogether honourable. But then, if silly girls gave their hearts carelessly into his keeping, and moaned over his defection afterwards, was he altogether to blame?

Truth to tell, it was almost impossible to harbour any unkind feeling against him, when his sunny eyes looked into yours with that frank half-appealing glance, which was part of the charm that won for him the hearts of all so readily.

Of late, I, who watched him with peculiar love, had become somewhat apprehensive lest he, who had been the cause of unhappiness to so many women, should himself become the victim of a woman, and that woman one whom I believed to be the most heartless of her sex. It was this which had induced me to buy the picture, which had so vividly impressed me when I stumbled across it in an out-of-the-way corner.

"Do you know," said Challoner, abruptly, after a long pause, "I seem to have seen this face before! It looks awfully familiar. Of course, with a different head-dress. But the eyes, the mouth—both beautiful, yet both so resolute; it looks like a woman who would stop at nothing for revenge, or to carry out her purpose, whatever it might be."

"Don't you know where you have seen it?" said I, with a keen glance at him. "Look again, Hal, and see if you can't trace a likeness between this woman's face and that of Miss Hollingsworth."

"Muriette Hollingsworth!" said Challoner, starting.

A deep flush dyed his face for an instant, then he asked:

"Who was Jael, anyway—some tragedy-queen?"

There is, as I've said, possibility of it in that face."

"Once upon a time, there was war between the hosts of Israel and the Canaanites, and Sisera was captain of the army of Canaan."

I began lightly. But to save my life, I could not disguise a certain earnestness which crept into my words. Challoner looked at me half suspiciously, half wonderingly.

"Well," he said briefly, "what has that to do with the woman?"

"This Jael was the wife of Heber the Kenite; and the Kenites, if not friends to the Canaanites, were at least neutral. Sisera was defeated, and fled from the field; he came to the tent of Heber, and there she met him, this woman Jael. She spoke to him with treacherous words of comfort and hope: she feasted him, she served him with her own hands, she led him to a soft couch, and then—"

"And then?" said Challoner.

"Then when he slept, she took the nail and the hammer and slew him."

"Uncomfortable sort of a woman, that," said Challoner, lightly. But he added, directly, with an accent of sharpness in his voice: "The idea of Mariette Hollingsworth's resembling this woman! Delmar, you are getting cracky. You do too much mousing among these old books and pictures; you need to go out more—go among the ladies a little. Come with me for instance, and let me introduce you to Miss Hollingsworth. When you have had a good view of her angelic face, you will want to put this miserable daub into your landlady's kitchen-fire."

"I know Miss Hollingsworth," I answered. "Challoner, I still insist that this picture resembles her—not only in form and feature, but in expression, especially in a certain lambent something which I have seen gleaming, at times, even through Miss Hollingsworth's cool self-possession. Who knows? perhaps Sisera had wronged some one whom this woman loved. Perhaps the horde of Canaanites had snatched from her, father, brother, or son—we cannot tell. At any rate, if there is any cause why Mariette Hollingsworth should desire to be revenged, she is the one woman whom I believe capable of taking that vengeance."

"How you talk," said Challoner, hastily, yet with a touch of uneasiness in his tone. "You are certainly getting turned, with your æsthetic craze."

He threw away his half-smoked cigar, lighted another, and strode restlessly across the room. I could not resist the impulse to speak to him on the subject that had so oppressed me.

"Hal, old fellow," I said, and a tremour would creep into my voice, "you must let me talk freely with you, this once. I am half a dozen years older than you are, and I venture, therefore, to speak. Don't be angry, dear old fellow; because I think so much of you, you know."

"I know, I know," said Challoner, with a womanish softening of his face. "Go on, Delmar."

He had stopped by the mantel, with one arm leaning on it. I crossed the room, and stood by him.

"I have seen you with many women, Hal," I said, "and time and time again I have heard that you were to marry this one, that one, or the other; but there is only one woman whom I think there might be danger from, and that is—Mariette Hollingsworth."

"Well, and if I marry her, what then?" said Challoner.

"If she were like other women, I would say, nothing," I replied; "but she is not. And, Challoner, do you remember that it is not more than two years since—since—Lilian Hollingsworth—died?"

Challoner started as if he had been stung.

"What has that to do with it?" he asked, with averted face.

"She was this girl's sister, who loved her passionately. You know it was whispered that you—that she—well, that she loved you, and you only flirted with her. It might have been heart-disease—it was very sudden—but it was said it was a broken heart. She was found lying on the sofa, in her chamber, dressed just as she

had come from a ball, where she had seen you devoting yourself to another."

Challoner turned upon me with ashen lips, quivering with emotion.

"Good Heaven! Delmar," he said, "why do you bring all that up now?"

Then he flung himself out of the room, and I was alone—alone with that pictured face, which looked out at me with Mariette Hollingsworth's eyes, only with an expression of horror, of remorse, yet of stern decision, which seemed to say that the woman shrank from the deed which justice, or the zeal of the enthusiast, demanded.

I did not see Challoner for some days, and then it was in the street, with Miss Hollingsworth. After that, I saw them together often. But he, as if the words of that night rankled in his heart, was constrained in his manner, and scarcely ever sought my company. As for the matter of that, none of his old acquaintances saw much of him. Mariette Hollingsworth seemed to have bewitched him. He was miserable out of her sight, and followed her like a faithful spaniel. Men of his own set sneered, and said that it was only another of his little "affairs;" but before long everyone knew that at last the trifer was in earnest.

I could not resist the mournful feeling that came over me when I saw them together; he so intense, so rapt, so full of buoyant hopefulness. Her manner was more reserved; that she did not discourage him was evident; yet, that there were times when she seemed to throw him off, I knew; for at such times he would come up to my room, and, with a brief return to his old affectionate confidence, would pour out his trouble into my ears.

As time wore on, however, she seemed to incline more to him, and I tried to hope that she cared for him and all might yet be well.

I had put away the picture of Jael, for, whenever I looked at that sad yet beautiful countenance, all my old doubts and fears about Hal's choice would come back with redoubled intensity; and, at such times, I could not but feel that Mariette had not, could not, so soon forget her sister's tragic death, for which rumour held Challoner—in great part, at least—accountable.

So time passed until the night of the ball to be given by a local company of volunteers, of which Challoner was a member.

I went, of course. And soon after, I saw Challoner enter with Miss Hollingsworth on his arm. He had never looked handsomer, more brilliant, more joyous, while she more than justified his evident devotion by her beauty.

I left the ball room at a reasonable hour, and went home and to bed. How long I slept, I know not. But I was awakened by a succession of thundering knocks at my chamber-door.

I hastily rose and threw on my clothes and opened the door. One of my friends in the volunteer uniform stood there.

"For God's sake, Delmar, come with me!" he cried. "Challoner!"

Then he broke down and sobbed like a child. My heart seemed to stop beating, and I felt faint and sick. I asked, breathlessly—

"Challoner?—Is he in trouble?"

"Dead," said my friend. "Poor Hal! Shot himself—Mariette Hollingsworth, we think. She must have refused him—mockingly, insultingly, perhaps. Poor Hal!"

I followed him out into the cold night, down to his boarding-house, and up to Challoner's room. A dense crowd was gathered there; it parted to let me pass.

Poor Hal! He lay where he had fallen. I knelt down and felt his pulse. Yes, he was dead—quite dead; and there was the spot marking where the bullet had gone in.

When we had done all we could for his body, someone called my attention to a photograph which lay on the table. It had not the Oriental head-dress of the false woman who had led him to ruin, but in every other respect it was a startling likeness. And, across the face, Challoner had written, as though with his last half-crazed effort, "Jael."

Early the next morning I called on Miss Hollingsworth. My card was carried up, and, with scarcely a moment's delay, she stood before me. Never had she appeared more regal. Her

long loose morning-robe set off her fine figure to advantage. Her face was strangely pale, but it was sternly calm. There were dark circles under her eyes, and I noticed a peculiar compression of her lips; but over all was that deep, strange calm.

"Ah, Mr. Delmar," she said, in her rich, deep tone, "this is indeed an unexpected pleasure."

She held out her hand.

But I drew back, saying sternly,—

"Madam, I do not care to touch the hand of a murderess."

She started violently and looked me in the face.

"You are tragic," she said. "Pray, what have I done to merit this salutation?"

"A murderess you are, madam," said I, "just as surely as though your hand had pulled the trigger. Harold Challoner is dead—died by his own hand. He loved you—that you cannot deny—loved you, and you led him on until the last; then you scorned him, and he—died."

For a moment, a shivering horror seemed to seize upon her, and she covered her face with her hands.

It was only for an instant; then she lifted her face, and I saw before me the pictured Jael.

Yes, just such an expression was hers—that dumb shadow of remorse, the horror, but, over all, the look of avenging fate.

"Am I a murderess!" she exclaimed, in a deep, almost hollow tone. "Then has he reaped nothing but the reward of his deeds. You men are strange creatures, Mr. Delmar. You play with women's hearts as though they were trifles; you revenge yourselves for one woman's perfidy on a thousand innocent women; but, when we too take the lash of justice in our hands, you cry: 'Out upon your womanhood!'"

"You loved him!" she said, after a pause. "Aye, but I loved too; it was only a girl, you know; but she was mine, and I loved her. Oh, how often, on my knees I wrestled with Heaven for her happiness! But it was in vain. He broke her heart."

Her voice ended in a choking sob.

"My one ewe-lamb is lost to me for ever; and, to avenge her—and I am not ashamed of it—I played this man false."

Her words shook me, in spite of myself. A great horror took hold of me.

"And now," she cried, with a sudden passionate flame lighting up her eyes, "now, as I have lavished the intensest passion of a woman's soul to avenge one wrong, I will devote all that remains of life, with all of hope, of ambition, of pleasure, to expiation of that act. Henceforth, no man shall lay his ruin at my door."

She lifted her hands towards heaven, as if in invocation. And thus I left her.

So far as I know, Mariette Hollingsworth has kept her word.

She went away, and from that day to this I have never seen or heard of her.

I burned the photograph of her beautiful face; but there hangs on my wall the pictured Jael, as a lasting warning to those who trifle with a woman's affection or trust a woman's smile.

FEMININE road-car conductors are quite the rule in Chili. They are pleasant-looking young women, who wear a uniform of blue flannel, white pinafores and Panama hats.

All the qualities which are attributed to excellent speech will be found to have their roots in excellent character. Men admire its clearness and accuracy; they come from a love of the truth and a desire to convey it exactly. They value its vigour and raciness, which flow from the active and vigorous mind. They delight in its intensity and tenderness, which are the natural outpouring of intense and tender feelings. The cheap imitations of these excellences, even when aided by proficiency in the study of language and expertness in its use can never communicate the same impressions or convey the same ideas. Like counterfeit coin, they lack the ring of the true metal.

ALL labour, well and worthily performed, is, in itself, a direct means of elevating and improving the labourer. In the first place, it calls forth energy and force, and they grow by exercise. No system of self-culture, however elaborate, can ever give that vigour and tone to the system, or that sense of power to the mind, which comes from regular, well-performed labour. To work with a purpose, whether it be at the forge or the shop, in the factory or the office, in the field or the studio, in the kitchen or the schoolroom, gives a conscious ability that nothing else can produce, and that goes far to make the manly and the womanly character.

HOMES are made sweet by simplicity and freedom from affectation, and these are also the qualities that put guests at their ease and make them feel at home. When they are absent, we take our pleasures sadly. A Dublin lady took a world of trouble to provide a variety of dishes and have all cooked with great skill for an entertainment, which she was to give in honour of Dean Swift; but, from the first bit that was tasted, she did not cease to undervalue the courses, and to beg indulgence for the shortcomings of the cook. "Hang it," said Swift, after the annoyance had gone on a little, "if everything is so bad as you say, I'll go home and get a herring dressed for myself!"

JAPANESE WOMEN.—Pretty as she is on a pictured fan, a Japanese woman is far more satisfying to the æsthetic soul as she patters along, alive, on her wooden clogs or straw sandals; the poorest woman in her single cheap cotton gown or kimono is as much a picture as her richer sister in silk and crape. With their heads elaborately dressed, and folds of gay crape or a glittering hair-pin thrust in the smooth loops of blue-black hair, they seem always in gala array, and, rain or shine, never cover these elaborate coiffures with anything more than a paper umbrella. Below that the loose dress, opening in a point nearly to the waist, has lining and folds of gayer crapes and silks laid inside, and the glory of the toilet culminates with the broad obi or sash. The obi of striped and figured crapes, brocades and silks are lined with stiffly-starched cloth, wound round and round the waist and fastened in a big cushion-like bow at the back. The long, loose sleeves give grace and ease to the scant, smooth gown, and each slender figure is a pretty study by herself. The sweet, soft voices, the gentle manners and elaborate courtesy displayed by every one of them add the last and most gracious touches to these picturesque and irresistibly charming women.

HERONS.—The habits of the herons are by no means so devoid of interest as might be supposed. No more devoted parents are known among the bird tribes than the herons. The fishes caught by the parents are disgorged and given to the young, ere they leave the nest, which is a mere rude collection of sticks, lined with wool and grass, and situated in some rocky cleft near its favourite haunts. The male heron teaches the young to swim and feed, and guards them with every symptom of jealous care. His bill may be used with great force and effect; and this bird has been known to kill a rat at a blow. By the water's edge the heron will remain motionless for long periods, resting on one foot or on both, and sleeping with the head resting between its shoulders. The young herons, at first, differ greatly in appearance from their parents; but this peculiarity is not confined to these birds, for the young of the swan are slate-coloured, while, as every one knows, the adults are snowy white. The species of heron known as the *Ardea asha* possess young of a pure white hue; while the adults in winter dress are white, the summer colour of the adult being a golden buff hue. Such interesting colour changes bear an obvious relation to the early history of the herons, and to the alterations of hue which, at various seasons, and under varying conditions, this bird-race has undergone.

FACETIÆ.

A GAME leg—Hindquarter of venison.

THE telephone operator has a perpetual holler-day.

A SAILOR is a lightning change man. In a twinkling he can turn into a hammock.

THE mathematician's favourite season is the summer. The milkman's is the spring.

BILLETTS says that he has a cook, a good creature, who has but one fault. She can't cook.

THE woman who maketh a good pudding in silence is better than she who maketh a tart reply.

AGENT: "Do you want a map of the earth?" Plumber: "Yes, I'll take your entire stock."

THE dog is not much of a pedestrian, but he can make an unlimited number of laps in a very short space.

A CORSET factory turns out two corsets a minute. This is a striking illustration of haste making waist.

IT is a great honour to be a rear-admiral, but, curiously enough, we never hear of a rear-general or a rear-high private.

"THAT remains to be seen," is what the young lady remarked when she left something on the plate "for manners."

IT isn't because a woman is exactly afraid of a cow that she runs away and screams. It is because gored dresses are not fashionable.

PROSPECTIVE LODGER: "And is there fire in the room?" Landlady: "No; but there is the most beautiful picture of an Italian sunset you ever saw."

"I WOULDN'T be a fool if I were you," said Jones to a friend. "If you were me you wouldn't be a fool," was the reply.

"IF there is anything I like better than classical music," said Major Branaigan, in a high voice, as he moved with the throng out of the concert-room, "it's lemons. They both set my teeth on edge."

YOUNG MAN: "I love your daughter, sir, and would like to make her my wife." Father: "What are your prospects?" Young Man: "I think they'll be pretty good if you'll say yes."

POLICE CLERK: "Two spools of cotton at four will be eightpence. Where shall I send the package, madam?" Well-dressed lady: "I will take it with me. I couldn't think of imposing on you during such a rush of business." Clerk: "Madam, I—" (Swoons).

BROWN: "Why don't you open your umbrella?" Coles: "Well, to tell you the truth, I'm afraid someone in the crowd will recognize it." Brown: "Then why do you carry it?" Coles: "Afraid someone will call for it while I'm out."

MAJOR STOFAN, who is quite musical, was out in society a few evenings since, and had sung two or three times for the company. About midnight he remarked to a small group: "Well, I think I will sing one more song, and go home." "Ah, major," said a brown-eyed girl, "can't you go home first?" He could, and did.

THE course of true love may be traced in the eight letters produced at the hearing of a breach-of-promise case. The first letter commenced "Dear Mr. Smith;" then followed "My Dear John;" then "My Darling John," "My Own Darling Jack," "My Darling John," "Dear John," "Dear Sir," "Sir," and all was over.

THE sound of breaking glass was heard through the dining-room. "What is it, Joseph? Have you broken another goblet?" "Yes; but I was very fortunate this time. It only broke in two pieces." "You call that being fortunate, do you?" "Yes, Madam, can't you imagine what a bother it is to pick them up when a glass breaks into a thousand pieces."

LADY at theatre (who has left her hat outside). "Where are you going, my dear?" Husband (at end of first act): "I am going out to see if your hat is all right."

"CHESTNUTS!" yelled several persons in the gallery at the minstrel show. "That's right, gentlemen," responded Bones. "If you don't get what you want, ask for it."

CHARLEY HAITEWATER: "Do you notice how sepulchral my voice is?" Mrs. C. H.: "That is quite natural, my dear. It comes from the place of departed spirits, you know."

HEARD IN SOCIETY.—He: "I beg your pardon, miss, but I don't admire your last name." She: "Great heavens, mad! Haven't I done everything in my power to change it? Must I knock a man down with a club?"

FATHER (to daughter): "Have you accepted the addresses of Mr. Moneybags?" Daughter: "Yes, papa." Father: "Well, isn't he very old, my dear?" Daughter: "Yes, papa. But he isn't nearly as old as I wish he was."

PROUD Father (who had just been presented with a son): "Flossy, little daughter, which would you like best to have—a little sister or a little brother?" Flossy (meditatively): "Well, papa, if it's just the same to you, I think I'd rather have a little white rabbit."

NOT ENTHUSIASTIC.—Mrs. Pullback: "Well, now that you live in our neighbourhood, Mr. Magunder, you must step in and hear my daughter sing." Magunder: "Thanks! I have heard her. In fact, they took something off my rent because I lived so near."

WIFE (to husband): "This house is altogether too small for our needs, John. Why don't you put an addition to it?" Husband (thoughtfully): "I've been thinking of that." Wife: "Something in the shape of a wing?" Husband: "No; something in the shape of a mortgage."

MERCHANT (to his clerk): "Well, sir, did you succeed in collecting that bill?" Clerk: "No, sir." Merchant: "It's just as I expected. That Jones never pays anything. He's a perfect boor." Clerk: "Why, sir, I found him very polite." Merchant: "In what way?" Clerk: "He asked me to call again."

DOCTOR: "My dear man, you have no organic trouble, no symptoms of disease, properly speaking; but you are simply run down. What is your occupation?" Patient: "I am a city labourer, and work upon the public streets." Doctor: "Ah, it is as I suspected! You require exercise."

GUS DE SMITH: "I wonder when we will get to see that new comet?" Gilhooly: "I don't think we will get to see it at all." "But it is reported that its tail has been seen?" "That's the reason we won't get to see it. As only its tail is in sight, it must be going away from us. I'm something of an astronomer myself."

TWO old men lamenting the changes that have taken place. First Old Man (sadly): "I cannot enjoy myself now as I could when I was a boy. I can't eat half as much." Second Old Man: "I cannot eat as much now as I could when I was a boy, but I regard that as rather a wise provision." "Why so?" "Because I haven't half as much to eat."

"MAY be pretty cold out your way," he observed to a farmer, who had just come into market with his whickers full of frost. "Yes, tolerable." "What did your thermometer register?" "I haven't got none." "I should think you'd want to know how cold it was." "No, I don't keer much. I kin alius tell by touchin' my tongue to the axe whether it's last summer or this winter."

A LAWYER caught a tramp in his office stealing some law books, which the latter intended to pawn. Seizing the intruder by the collar the lawyer exclaimed: "You scoundrel! I'll have you tried and sent to the penitentiary." "Let go my neck, Colonel. If you are going to have me tried, I suppose I'd better engage you as my lawyer, as you have the luck to be on hand."

THEY were talking of the feminine sex, when Madam B. exclaimed: "You men are right to accuse us. I only know two perfect women!" "And who is the other?" inquired her companion gallantly.

FARMER: "Do you want this job of shovelling snow?" Tramp: "I am not a snow shoveller. I sprinkle lawns. The man who shovels snow will be along in about ten minutes."

"YOUNG men believe in nothing now-a-days," says Mrs. Ramsbotham, with a deep sigh. "Why, there's my nephew Tom, who was brought up as a Christian, and now he's an acrostic."

"A MAN can get nothing without labour," said a woman to a tramp who declined to saw some wood in exchange for a dinner. "I know better than that," he replied, as he turned away; "he can get hungry."

"WHEN we were small hats," observed Mrs. Timmarsh, "the men complained because they didn't get enough for their money. Now, when we wear large hats, they complain because they can't see at the theatre. Men are never satisfied, any way."

"I SHALL hope to see you, who are a warm friend and patron of art, at my concert this evening," said a lady, who is a musical crank, to Varicose, the landscape painter. "Thank you—thank you!" replied Varicose. "Nothing would give me greater pleasure, but—hem!—I have one little weakness which might interfere with the performance." "Ah. Nothing serious, I hope. What is it?" "Well—er—you see, I snore when I sleep."

A YOUNG lady who uses and hears used nothing but classic English, visited the icy incline, and fixed herself comfortably on the toboggan in preparation for her first ride. The starter was ready to act, and a small boy at the bottom of the slide yelled out: "Let her go, Gallagher!" Then the young lady grew fussy, and, looking up, pleadingly, she exclaimed: "No, no! Please, Mr. Gallagher, don't let me go! I'm not ready yet!"

GEORGIAN MAN: "Talk about cold! You folks don't know what cold is!" OMaha man: "Oh, come now!" "No, you don't! Why, the other mornin', I couldn't eat my breakfast for half-an-hour because my teeth were frozen up." "See here, I'm not offering any prizes, you know." "But it is true as preaching." "Teeth frozen up! Where was your mouth?" "The teeth weren't in my mouth; they were in a glass of water!"—*American Paper*.

COUNTRY BRIDE (in draper's): "I want to look at some summer silks." Clerk: "Yes, ma'am. We have them in all shades—elephant's breath, London smoke, Browning's muse, animal fat, shrimp pink, onion gin, pug's nose, copper-red—all the latest styles, ma'am, and warranted to wash." Country Bride: "Oh, I don't want anything fancy. Show me a plain red an' yaller plaid."

WHERE THE UMBRELLA WAS.—"Good-morning, professor," said the landlady, sweetly, as that individual entered the breakfast-room and took charge of all the morning papers. "I hadn't noticed it, madam," replied the professor, seating himself on the papers to keep the other boarders from getting them. "Hadden't noticed what?" asked Mrs. Cloud. "That it is a good-morning," retorted the professor, amiably. "It's raining cats and dogs out. Where's my umbrella, Mrs. Cloud?" I left it in the corner of my room on going out yesterday morning, and it's not there now. I can't understand why it is that the morality, integrity, the—the common everyday honesty of life seems to disappear when one gets within the portals of this house. Where, madam, I demand to know—where is my umbrella?" "Where," replied the lady, striking a high G, and pouring hot water over her oatmeal in her excitement. "Where? Why, the owner came here yesterday and recovered it!" And the silence that came over the meal was so hard that no one could break it.

SOCIETY.

It is believed and hoped in Paris that Her Majesty will spend a couple of days there on her return from Aix. This little diversion would no doubt give Prince Henry and his wife great satisfaction, as the French capital is particularly cheery-looking in the spring, and a drive in the Bois de Boulogne is never more delightful than about the end of April, provided that late frosts have not checked the growth of greenery.

The Princess of Wales, says *Modern Society*, anonymously contributed a large sum towards the new English Church of St. Alban's, at Copenhagen, in which Her Royal Highness has shown herself so much interested. The edifice promises to be an exceedingly pretty one, the outer walls consisting of dark grey flint set in light-coloured limestone, the two forming a very effective contrast.

The church is charmingly situated in the immediate neighbourhood of the harbour and the Langelinie promenade, on the border of the ancient moats, and is surrounded by a number of fine old trees. The spot was a favourite one of the Princess's in her girlhood days.

The Royal yacht *Victoria and Albert*, which is to convey Her Majesty as far as Cherbourg, will take in its train its fellow yacht, the *Alberta*, as well as the *Galatea* and *Enchantress*. Her Majesty's safe transit will be thus assured, no matter how lustily "the stormy winds do blow-wow-wow!" It may be interesting to some of our readers to know that Her Majesty's heavy baggage for her continental trip weighed as much as three tons. It was despatched shortly before the party started.

At a carnival recently held in Vienna, the toilettes of the hundred-and-twenty ladies who formed the procession, represented a value of £50,000; and the value of the diamonds worn was from £100,000 to £500,000.

We are to have one of the Shah's cousins in England shortly, to represent the Persian potentate on the occasion of the Queen's Jubilee. He is a gentleman possessing a quantity of jewellery only a little less valuable than the Shah's, and his wives are many.

It is said that the Empress of Russia had a presentiment that her husband's life would be again attempted on the anniversary of his father's death, and that morning was in a highly nervous state as to what the day might bring forth. It is not the common lot of Russian monarchs to die in their beds. Demetrius, who ascended the Muscovite throne in 1584, was murdered by the usurper Boris Godunoff, whose successor, Feodor II., was murdered. Ivan VI. was murdered in 1764, also Peter III. in 1797, while Ivan was in prison; and Paul, son of "Catherine the Great," was assassinated in 1801. About the death of Czar Nicholas, in 1895, there were many suspicions, and his son Alexander was assassinated exactly six years ago. The Romanoffs are apparently a doomed race.

The death of the Duchess of Richmond and Gordon so universally mourned was a severe blow to her husband, the pair having lived together in mutual love and affection for upwards of forty years. The Duchess was not much of a Society woman, and in these days she would be considered decidedly slow; but she was a plain, easy, domesticated lady, and a most devoted wife and mother.

Their Graces had six children, and from the birth of the fifth child the long period of fourteen years intervened till the birth of Lord Walter, during which period there had been a considerable dispersion in the paraphernalia of the nursery. The young gentleman is now learning Government official work, and he has a good schoolmaster in Lord Salisbury. Goodwood House will for a second year be a house of mourning during the races.

STATISTICS.

CALIFORNIA has 4,000 wine-growers, and at least 100,000 acres are planted in vines. This represents an investment of £12,000,000, and gives employment or support to 100,000.

THE GREAT CITIES.—In actual business handled London is the chief commercial city of the world, Liverpool second, and New York a good third.

RUSSIAN BEGGARS.—The number of beggars assisted by the St. Petersburg Mendicancy Society varies at present from 6,000 to 10,000, of whom the *gouvernement* of St. Petersburg furnishes the largest contingent, while among the whole number there has not been a single Jew or Tartar.

CONVICT LABOUR IN THE UNITED STATES.—The Commissioner of Labour, in his report to the Secretary of the Interior, says, on the subject of convict labour, that the number of prisoners of all grades employed in the institutions covered by the report is 64,609, of whom there are 58,714 males and 5,895 females. Of this number 46,278 are engaged in productive labour, 15,360 in prison duties, and 8,972 are sick or idle. Of the total number, 14,827 are employed under the public account system, 15,670 under the contract system, 5,756 under the piece price system, and 9,104 under the lease system. This prison population of 64,609 has a proportion of one in a thousand to the population of the United States.

GEMS.

PERFECTION is attained by slow degrees; she requires the hand of time.

A MAN who is not ashamed of himself need not be ashamed of his early condition.

BE what thou singly art, and personate only thyself. Swim smoothly in the stream of thy nature, and live but one man.

IT is huge folly rather to grieve for the good of others than to rejoice for that good which God hath given of our own.

AN influence beyond our control lays its strong hand on every deed we do, and weaves its consequences into an iron tissue of necessity.

HOUSEHOLD TREASURES.

BOILED SALT CODFISH.—Take a nice piece of codfish, cover with cold water, and set it on the fire, and let it simmer one hour. Repeat this twice, changing the water each time. Serve with drawn butter, fried pork scraps, boiled potatoes and beets, all to be minced well together on the plate.

POTATO SOUP.—Boil one pound of potatoes, and, when done, beat them up very fine with a fork, gradually adding one quart of boiling milk, in which has previously been stewed a small onion chopped fine, and a piece of mace; season to taste, and boil for a quarter of an hour, taking care to keep it stirred.

TO FRY FISH ON CUTLETS ECONOMICALLY.—Dry your fish thoroughly with a cloth, then roll it in flour; next make a batter of flour and water, dip your fish in on both sides, dredge over some fine rasping, which you can procure from a bakery. Fry quickly in boiling lard or oil.

BROILED CODFISH.—Select a nice thick piece of codfish, and freeze in water over night. Drain and dry well; broil twenty minutes. Then place the fish in a piece of brown paper and pound so as to break it well, and pour boiling water over it twice. Place on your platter with butter and cream of milk. Set in oven a few minutes before serving.

MISCELLANEOUS.

No one is able wisely to correct a fault, either in himself or in others, unless he has a fair conception of the virtue which has been transgressed. It is by raising and purifying their ideas of truthfulness that men learn how to regard deceit and what weapons to use against it. It is by upholding the character of honesty that they can truly battle against fraud. It is by elevating their notions of benevolence that they obtain power to combat selfishness. It is by contemplating man as he should be, and becoming familiar with the conception, that we arrive at the truest conclusion concerning what he is and how he may be improved.

It is impossible to lay down any universally applicable rule as to the number of hours which it is desirable to sleep. Probably no two persons require precisely the same amount of slumber, and it is scarcely likely that any person needs the same length of sleep on all occasions. Even the most monotonous lives involve the expenditure of varying quantities of energy, and make different demands on the stores of nerve and muscle power on several days. It is not implied that sleep is the season of recuperation. That is unlikely in view of the ascertained facts in relation to tissue-feeding and physiological change; but it is nevertheless true in practice that prolonged or exceptionally severe exertion, whether of brain or muscle, requires a corresponding lengthy or deep repose. Speaking broadly, sleep is the state in which the fibres are, so to say, damped down, and the machinery has opportunity for cooling. The bow is, as it were, unstrung, and may recover its elasticity during the recurring periods of slumber.

FOX AND CROMWELL.—The early Friends refused to bow or to take off their hats to any one, justifying this by the plea that it would be an acknowledgment of superiority, whereas God had made all men equal. In this there was considerable reason. As a matter of fact, the sect by no means neglected to give honour where honour was due, only they showed it by tangible actions than by lip service. Thus, when Fox called upon Cromwell, he scrupulously kept his hat on his head, though both by word and act he showed the Protector that he respected his office. Instead of being offended Cromwell remarked: "Now I know that there is a people risen that I cannot buy either with gifts, honours, offices, or places, but all other sects and people I can." Nor was Charles II., with all his faults, offended when Edward Burrough with scant courtesy went to him to complain of the persecution the Quakers were undergoing in New England.

NAPOLEON'S CARRIAGE.—The carriage in which the First Napoleon made his famous retreat from Moscow, and in which he, as emperor, set out from Paris in the campaign which closed at Waterloo, is now preserved in London among the effects of the Duke of Wellington. It is a two-seated conveyance, and the top, or cover, is lined with thin sheet-iron. There is also a front curtain of iron, which can be lowered at will. The wheels are large and heavy, and the steps at either side silver finished and of a curious design. The rear seat was the one used by Napoleon. Under the cushions of the seat he carried blankets and pillows. The back of the front seat opens, and at the right hand forms a cupboard, in which were tin plates, knives, spoons, water-can, and a small fluid lamp. On the left is a long opening, extending forward nearly to the "dash-board," and into which the emperor of the first nation in Europe and the military autocrat of the world was wont to extend his feet and legs in order that he might lie at full length. The blankets, pillows, spoons, knives and lamps that were used by the emperor are still preserved.

NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

B.—Apprentices' indentures require a 2s. 6d. stamp if there is no premium.

G. H. W.—It is a repairing lease, and you will have to do the repairs.

D. S.—He is not liable, as you have allowed six years to elapse.

G. B.—There is no variety of printing ink that can be termed fadeless.

C. R.—1. We have never heard of them. 2. Fair writing.

C. M. B.—We regret we cannot oblige you, as we never give addresses.

TIP-TAP TOE.—You are really a second cousin to the persons named.

A READER.—The degrees of heat vary according to the seasons.

E. R.—Moles should not be removed without the aid of a physician.

Y. S. H.—Glycerine acidulated with a little fresh lemon juice will help to whiten and soften the skin.

E. H. G.—Leap year comes (with certain exceptions) once in every four years. The next leap year will be 1888.

ALL ALONE.—1. It is evidently a school examination question. Before answering, you must let us know whether you refer to England only, or to the whole world. 2. Very good.

T. H.—Rainwater is always soft; but the waters of springs and rivers may become hard by running through rocks which have gypsum in them, or through limestone rocks or soil which contain chalk.

R. B.—Offenbach is the chief manufacturing town of the Grand Duchy of Hesse, Germany. It contains a castle, and has manufactories of cottons and woollens, carriages, cards, musical instruments, jewellery, and other wares.

MACC.—There are said to be about fifty kinds of eels in different parts of the world. The European conger, or sea-eel, caught on the coasts of France and England, is often ten feet long, and not unfrequently weighs a hundred pounds.

L. C. H.—The sand-eel is found in both Europe and America, but only in salt water. It is so called because it lives in the sand, into which it can dart head foremost, and bury itself very quickly. They are caught for food and bait, and much use is made of them for the latter purpose on the fishing grounds of Newfoundland.

ROSA.—In addition to "Thaddeus of Warsaw" and "The Scottish Chiefs," Miss Jane Porter wrote "The Pastor's Piousness," "Duke Christian of Lunenburg," "The Field of Forty Footsteps," and "Sir Edward Seaward's Diary." Her sister, Anna Maria, wrote a number of books, the latest of which, we believe, was, "Tales Round a Winter's Hearth."

ESSIE.—We can scarcely understand how an educated young lady should prefer one of the suitors in question to the other. Of course it is always better for the hand to go with the heart; but you must remember that there may be love without respect, and if your "intended" should prove uncongenial for lack of education, the union might be anything but a happy one. Your penmanship is fair.

L. C. S.—Eggs are preserved as follows: Put the eggs in a weak lye, and let them remain in it for twelve hours, after which lay them in fresh water for three hours. Make a rich syrup of one pound of sugar to one pound of figs; let them boil until clear; when they are done take them out, put them into jars, and let the air up boil until it becomes thick; pour it hot upon the eggs, and tie down the jars closely to exclude the air.

N. P. M.—The celebrated porcelain tower of Nanking, China, destroyed during the Taiping rebellion, was built in 1431-32, and was of octagonal form, 260 feet high, in nine stories, each adorned with a cornice and gallery, and covered with a roof of green tiles, with a bell suspended at each corner, which sounded when moved by the wind. On the top was a pinnacle in the shape of a pineapple, surmounted by a gilded ball. A spiral staircase led to the summit.

L. W.—There would not be any greater advantage in shaving every day for ten days than in shaving once. If you pursue the first course your hair will only be one-third of an inch long at the end of a month, instead of one-half inch. In fact, although many authorities recommend shaving the head when the hair begins to fall off, opinions are divided as to the advisability of doing so. A part of any advantage gained by shaving is undoubtedly the facility given to keep the scalp cool and clean.

PUZZLED STUDENT.—1. The State of Missouri was made one of the United States in 1821, after a protracted and exciting political struggle, which ended in the "Missouri Compromise" (subsequently repealed) of 1820, by which the new State was permitted to retain slavery. 2. Missouri never passed an ordinance of secession, but the State was the theatre of many active campaigns; various parts of it being exposed more or less to the ravages of the war of 1861-65. 3. Missouri has been called the "Pennsylvania of the West," on account of her rich stores of coal, iron, zinc, and lead.

J. T.—1. George Washington was a mason. 2. Only passable.

D. W.—Employ your leisure moments at home in practicing penmanship.

EFFIE.—Charles Reade, the novelist, was born at Ipsden, Oxfordshire, England, in 1814, and died April 11, 1884.

ELODIE.—Your penmanship displays a considerable degree of nervousness, and consequently would appear to indicate a similar temperament.

M. H.—A lady possessing a rather fair complexion, hazel eyes, and dark-brown hair similar to that enclosed in your communication, would be classed as a demi-brunette.

G. S.—Religious and political subjects are never touched upon here, and the settlement of disputes or arguments on such themes is always left to the interested parties.

E. H. H.—Celluloid is extensively used in making imitation india-rubber combs and other toilet articles. It is also employed in the manufacture of stereotype plates, but there is no record of its having been utilised in rubber-stamp making.

S. F. R.—No dependence can be placed on a man who, while in the company of a lady friend, will deliberately flirt with others. He should have enough gentlemanliness to abstain from such reprehensible actions while in her presence or where she can view his incontinence.

D. S. S.—In cases where engagements to marry are broken, both parties should return all presents that have passed between them, not even reserving letters. This having been done, all sense of obligation ceases, and neither one can accuse the other of any mercenary motives. Besides this, such memories may prove compromising in after years, and in any event generally act as sad reminders of what might have been, or call up other bitter recollections.

LOVE'S KNIGHT.

EARLY, I bowed at Love's fair shrine.
"What dost thou here, with me?" Love said.
"He kissed me, and her lips were red."
"Rise up," Love cried, "Thou dost divine
Naught yet of me: thou art not mine."

Again to Love I bent my knee.
"Why bowest thou," Love said, "down here?"
"She wept at parting, Love, with me."
Said Love: "Thou canst no longer be
"When tears alone show love to thee."

Once more to Love I knelt full low.
"Why comest thou," said Love, "again?"
"Not for a kiss, nor yet for rain
Of tender tears, for naught I know—
Save that, to her and me, release."

"From all unrest, a gracious peace,
Exalted joy, serene and high,
Do always come." "No longer lie,"
Said Love, "here at my feet, in light
Walk thou, my worthy welcome knight."

L. A.

CHARLIE P.—If you had gently pushed the stick aside from your sister's face with a smile everything would doubtless have gone off harmoniously. Any exhibition of temper or violence should be avoided under circumstances where the offence was purely accidental.

FREDDIE.—The largest of the Egyptian pyramids was built by Oshose or Sphis; the next largest by Ophrenes or Sen-Sphis; and the third by Merochares, last king of the fourth Egyptian dynasty, said to have lived before the birth of Abraham.

E. G.—Donizetti wrote the opera of "Lucresia Borgia" in 1834; "La Sonnambula" was composed by Bellini in 1831. Auber composed the comic opera known as "Fra Diavolo," the libretto of which was written by Scribe. Verdi wrote "Il Trovatore" in 1853, and "Eran" in 1841; his latest production is entitled "Otello."

S. C. L.—A good embrocation for sprains and bruises is made as follows: Four upon two ounces of carbonate of ammonia (smelling salts) as much distilled vinegar as will dissolve it; then add one and a half pint of common rectified spirits, and shake the whole together in a bottle. Moisten and rub the part affected with a cloth or sponge dipped in the liquid.

K. S. T.—There are several theatrical managers who might be persuaded to read the play in question, and from them you may expect a fair, impartial criticism. If adapted to the wants of any one of them, you will have no trouble in finding a ready purchaser. Do not be discouraged by any disparaging remarks concerning it, but ask a judgment upon its merits after it has been thoroughly and carefully read.

GEORGE B.—"Bohemian" is a slang term applied to any locality frequented by journalists, artists, actors, opera-singers, and others of the same ilk, and they are on this account called "Bohemians." Originally the latter name was used by the French to designate a gipsy, from the erroneous notion that the first of that race came from Bohemia. An irregular, wandering, restless way of living, like that of the gipsies, has on that account, been dubbed a "Bohemian life." An author of demure works and irregular habits is generally termed a "Bohemian."

F. H. J.—There is nothing for you to do, under the circumstances, but to keep quiet and feel profoundly thankful that you have escaped marriage with such a man.

O. S. W.—One of the best authorities says that the hair grows at the rate of about one half inch per month, but this is probably only the average rate, and may not be correct for all cases.

EMER.—When a private shows especial aptitude for the various duties assigned him he stands an excellent chance for appointment as corporal, sergeant, or other non-commissioned office, when any vacancies occur.

B. M. B.—Rub each egg carefully all over, while still perfectly fresh, with good lard or butter, and keep in a cool place, not packed in hay. A new-laid egg treated in this way will preserve its good qualities for weeks.

D. M. S.—How do you know that you are reduced to such an alternative? Perhaps some man that you can love will yet seek your hand. A woman should not marry a man that she does not love simply to secure a home. It is an old adage that "nobody pays so dearly for a home as a woman that marries for one."

W. E.—A young man who initiates with the idea of advancing himself should always endeavour to gain the good will of his superiors, but more especially that of his company commander, by strict observance of all the rules governing a soldier, sobriety and an evident desire to please in every particular. This should not be done in a truckling, subservient manner, but be evidenced by a manly, straightforward performance of duty.

RITA.—No good mother need fear that such a skeleton as a child's ingratitude will ever enter any chamber of her heart to steal and sap by its ghastly presence the very life-blood of her veins; for by the fulness of the measure of love and devotion which she has given shall she receive measure in return. "It does not pay to be a mother" was once said by a mother. If it were so no sadder truth could ever find utterance in this world.

B. L. T.—Get a chemist to make you the following freckle-removing compound:—Muriate of ammonia, 1 drachm; lavender water, 2 drachms; distilled water, 1 pint. Apply two or three times a day. Another mixture is made by placing in a glass bottle one ounce of lemon juice, quarter of a drachm of powdered borax and half a drachm of pulverised sugar. Shake well, allow it to stand for a few days, and then apply two or three times a week. Either of these is said to act in a very satisfactory manner.

H. H.—Hairs-dyes are sure to produce decidedly injurious effects upon the hair, burning it, arresting the natural secretion of animal oil in it and favouring the production of baldness. In many cases they set up painful inflammation of the scalp, and numerous instances of paralysis of the brain are said to have been directly traceable to their use. Had Nature intended to furnish a blue-eyed, fair-skinned person with black hair, she would have done so; but, recognising the almost absurd contrast, she dejected, and gave her a suit of light-brown, like the beautiful silky silk it enclosed in your letter. For the reasons stated above we invariably prefer to decline publishing recipes for making such dyeing compounds.

E. H. H.—If you wish to tan skins for your own use the process is very simple and inexpensive. First wet the skin; then lay it, if at side up on a smooth log, and remove all particles of flesh and fat still adhering to it; then tack it to a piece of board, and keep it moistened for about three days with a strong solution of salt and water, applied with a sponge or rag. After this, for three days longer, keep it wet with a strong solution of alum and water. Then take it off, and, while still wet, strew on wheat-bran liberally, and rub and roll it in your hands, as though you were washing your handskerchiefs, until it is quite dry. The longer the rubbing is kept up the softer and whiter will be the skin. Or, when your hands are tired, you can fold it up lengthwise, if at side out, and draw it backward and forward over a smooth pole. Be careful not to tear the skin. Still another method is to remove the bits of flesh and fat; scatter powdered salt and alum in equal proportions on the inside; fold it up and put away for a week, renewing the salt and alum occasionally, and wetting it just enough to form the powder into paste. At the end of the week fetch the job by rubbing in dry bran, as described above. There are more elaborate methods of tanning, requiring several different preparations, but the ones given will do very well.

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